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THE
MONARCH OF MINCING-LANE.

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THE

MONARCH OF MINCING-LANE

A Novel.

BY

WILLIAM BLACK,

AUTHOR OF 'KILMENY,' 'IN SILK ATTIRE,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1871.

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Je me dis seulement, 'A cette heure, en ce lieu,
Un jour, je fus aimé, j'aimais, elle était belle.
J'enfouis ce trésor dans mon âme immortelle,
Et je l'emporte à Dieu !

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THE
MONARCH OF MINCING-LANE



CHAPTER I.

A LOVER'S QUARREL.

TOWARDS the lower end of Park-lane there are a number of small, narrow, round-fronted houses—*bijou residences* they are called by the auctioneers—which look as if their balconies had been squeezed out of them by sudden pressure. At a window overlooking one of those miniature balconies stood, on the forenoon of a certain day in February, two young people, who did not seem to be in an amiable frame of mind. They looked out, in a silent and absent way, on the strange glare of wintry sunshine that lay over the familiar scene

before them; but they did not seem to notice the peculiar effect it produced. At this moment, indeed, Hyde-park was transfigured; and any one less intent upon personal affairs could not fail to have been struck by its appearance. Above the tall houses of Knightsbridge and Kensington Gore, that lay in a faintly blue shadow, there was, instead of the sun, a confused mass of shifting golden mist; and this strong centre of light shone over the broad slopes of the Park, which were intensely green with melted hoar-frost, and sent a pale radiance to gleam whitely on the ranges of buildings lying west of the Marble Arch. Down in front of Park-lane the leafless trees stood dark and clear in this bewildering light; and you could see through them the arm and shield of the Achilles statue; while around the Serpentine the masses of elms were of a pale blue; and that again became a dusky purple among the close trees of Kensington-gardens. The strong, shifting, yellow glare seemed to be the light of the coming Spring fighting with the retreat-

ing fog of the Winter ; the atmosphere had grown warm and moist, and the grass was glittering with the gleaming drops of the melted rime ; while down by Apsley House a man was wheeling along a barrow full of primroses and violets imbedded in moss, and you could buy a pennyworth of the sweet new life that was beginning to throb and swell in the clear country air, far out beyond the town.

The elder of these two persons was a young man of about twenty-four, whom you would at first sight have taken for a Spaniard. But with his dark complexion, black moustache, and somewhat haughty bearing, he showed an English height of stature and breadth of shoulder, and exhibited an unmistakably English bluntness and directness of manner. He was handsome rather than good-looking — well-formed, strong, with a clear dark eye, a square intellectual forehead, and a profusion of dark and wavy hair. There was strength in his appearance rather than grace ; and there was at times perceptible in the reticence of his

manhood a trace of wilfulness in speech or gesture that was clearly juvenile, and spoke of a somewhat uncurbed youth. He was dressed fashionably, but rather negligently; and had a riding-switch in his hand.

When two young people stare persistently at nothing, look morose and keep near each other without uttering a word, they are lovers and have fallen out.

His companion, who had now sat down at the opposite side of the window, had apparently, like himself, been out riding. She still wore her habit; and her hat lay beside his on the table behind them. In fact, they had just returned from a canter in the Row, where, it is presumable, the quarrel had arisen.

She was certainly not much his junior; and there was a mature womanly grace and ease about her figure and manner. She was not lovely. Men might have said of her, 'Handsome sort of woman;' women would have said of her, 'Plain—decidedly plain.' But strong men, and intellectual men, have fallen in love with plain women;

and, indeed, those women who figure in history as having enchained and fascinated, beyond power of protest or resistance, the greatest men of their time, have almost invariably been plain. Nor has it always happened that they have possessed compensations for their want of personal beauty in the way of wit, ability, or special accomplishments. But since ever history began to be minute, we know that the mistresses of great statesmen and the loves of great poets have been, as a rule, the reverse of beautiful; and in our own times, in our own small circles, there are few of us who have not met some plain commonplace sort of woman who somehow exercises a nameless fascination over all the men around her, and, in the poor competition of the drawing-room, wins easy victories over the heads of far more beautiful women. Perhaps Miss Thormanby, who now sat twisting a corner of her glove, did not possess this power of general fascination; but she had certainly taken captive the man who stood beside her, and who so frequently re-

belled, in a bitter way, against his slavery. Yet he did not wish to break the chains that bound him. Had he so resolved, he had a resolute will that would have sent him into Lopez's army or into the Australian bush for half-a-dozen years, and so completed his freedom. But to a young man, however dissatisfied he may be with the woman with whom ill-luck has made him fall in love, there is something very sad in relinquishing all the future he had constructed for them both. He has a vague idea that he will never again love a woman as he loves this one. If he destroys the beautiful world that love has painted for him in the distance, it will never, he thinks, be possible to build it up again. Thus he would rather struggle on with those weaknesses of character which he perceives in his companion, and strive to improve her and raise her to that higher standard of womanhood which is his ideal. That he should ever undertake such a task, shows what a peculiar film love may cast over the eyes of the clearest-headed men.

Mary Thormanby had a handsome figure and a good presence. Her features were rather irregular; her complexion pale and a trifle dull; her eyes large, gray, and fine; her hair flaxen. Her face generally was cold, and seemed to want flexibility; while her aquiline nose, her thin lips, and a certain gait she had gave one a notion that she was unimpressionable, resolute, and proud. If such was the expression of her general appearance, her manner speedily contradicted it; for nothing could exceed the facile complaisance of her bearing, especially to strangers. She had a trick of making friends with one in a few seconds; and she seemed to bring herself, by the exercise of a swift, keen, intellectual sympathy, immediately *en rapport* with the person addressed. It was then that her eyes grew full of light and intelligence, and banished the apparent coldness of her face. Her teeth, too, it should be mentioned, were beautifully white and regular; and when, with this access of sympathy brightening the big gray eyes, she chose to smile and

disclose the nut-white teeth, the transformation of her face was perfect, and you would regard her henceforth as quite a different creature from the impassive reserved woman who had entered the room with the cold dignity of an empress.

‘You are romantic, and I am not : that is all,’ she said at last. to her companion, Philip Drem.

There was a touch of indifference or resignation in her voice, as though she had ceased to care any longer about the matter in dispute.

‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘I suppose I am romantic : I fancied that women were instinctively truthful and sincere.’

‘You carry *your* sincerity to the verge of rudeness,’ she said calmly.

‘Perhaps.’

There was an interval of dead silence, only broken by the rumbling of the carriages down below, as they rolled past towards Piccadilly or, conversely, up to Oxford-street. The glare of yellow sunlight still hung over Kensington and fell on the

wet green slopes of the Park and on the white fronts of the houses in the north. At length she was provoked into speaking, and said sharply,

‘The fact is, you have been a spoiled boy all your life, and you not only expect to have everything you want, but you expect that every one will be to you just what you want them to be.’

‘That is asking no sacrifice from you,’ he said, with what was remarkably like a sneer; ‘you can be anything to anybody. You can persuade the greatest stranger that you have been of his or her way of thinking all your life. You are too clever to be sincere. You persuade yourself that all this pretence is kindness to the people whom you meet; but it is only an intellectual feat that you are proud of, and you forget that it is deception as well. Why, the way in which you flattered and cajoled that hideous old woman O’Mallory—’

‘Lady O’Mallory was a friend of my parents in Ireland,’ said Miss Thormanby, not caring to take any notice of what he

had said about herself, 'and I ought to do my best to please her for their sakes. If you have no respect for me, at least respect those who are older than yourself—'

'Respect the O'Mallory!' he cried, with a laugh.

'I say you are merely a spoiled boy. It is the same now as when we first began to know you down in Surrey. Then there was nobody in the house—nobody in the world—but Master Philip. No one was thought of but Master Philip; and even when your papa came down from town, he had no authority in his own house. Master Philip strolled about with his gun, and amused himself; and luncheon, and dinner, and visitors were alike expected to wait on Master Philip. A foolish step-mother was the worst of the lot; and looked upon herself as only too happy if her darling boy would accept the daintiest bit of everything at table. She was delighted to wait upon him herself; and would have gone out shooting with him,

to load his gun, I daresay, if she only knew how. Then Master Philip goes to Cambridge, and is nearly expelled for throwing a man into the river, and kicking his hat in after him. But all at once Master Philip gets into some political clique, begins to study diligently, takes his degree, and comes up to London a fierce Radical. Nothing will do for him but that every man and woman he meets must be honest—that is to say, rude and vulgar—and you are contemptible if you do not nourish great schemes for the future of street-scavengers, and costermongers, and such people. To tell you the truth, Philip, I begin to feel your latest hobby a little tiresome. If politics only mean that you are to become suspicious of your friends, and disagreeable in your manner, I prefer letting them alone. When I have been privileged to meet representatives of the classes about whom you are so anxious, I have generally found them eager to get half-a-crown by begging rather than by work—others very ready to pocket a spoon or a

brooch when they have been mending the water-pipes or painting the house—others systematically cheating you in the addition of their bills; and I really don't see why one should so trouble oneself about their political privileges and position. They won't thank you for your disinterested efforts—which seem to me to consist chiefly in insulting your friends; and so I wish you would assume some other character.'

'You have the nimblest wit of any woman I know,' he said, provoked into a grim smile by her rather vehement speech. 'You are quite aware that you are fencing with the question; and that politics have remarkably little to do with your habit of making-believe. Why do I protest against your constant hypocrisy—if I must speak plainly? I want to show you the absurdity of all this pretence, that answers no end whatever. I want you to be honest. And you indignantly deny that you are guilty of anything but common courtesy; and then the next minute you meet some hideous old fool of a woman—'

‘That is Lady O’Mallory, I presume,’ she interjected.

‘Or some man to whom you have been scarcely introduced; and you talk to the one as if she were your only friend, and to the other as if you were engaged to him. You ought to have more self-respect than to play the hypocrite in order to amuse these people—’

‘Really, Philip, your Radical politics are teaching you charming language. However, plain-speaking, as you suggest, must be such a novelty to me, that I ought to welcome it. I wish, though, you would be a little more consistent in your censures. You say I ought to be more honest; I should appear to be what I am; I should show everybody what I think. Yet you yourself are constantly charging me with having degraded views of life—with caring for nothing beyond amusement, dress, and the talk of society. I have no grand aspirations; I only live for my own gratification; I am selfish—and so on, and so on, and so on. If my true nature is

so very bad, and mean, and petty, and contemptible, is it not better that I should conceal it? If I am so selfish, ought I not to pretend to take an interest in other people and their affairs? Being so poor, and commonplace, and unsympathetic a creature, surely my hypocrisy becomes a virtue; and I wish that you, too, would become so much of a hypocrite as to lessen your rudeness, and treat me with a little of the respect which you would show to any stranger.'

With that she drew herself up to her full height and walked across the room to the table on which her hat and riding-whip lay.

Philip shrugged his shoulders.

'I wish you would treat me with a little of the profuse affection you show to *every* stranger!' he muttered. But she did not hear him.

Then she took her hat and whip into her hand, gathered up her dress with the other, and, with her pale clear-cut English face looking pitiless and proud, said coldly,

‘I must change my dress for luncheon; uncle and aunt will be home presently. Will you stay?’

‘No, thank you.’

‘Do you dine with us this evening, then?’

‘I scarcely remember whether I promised or not. But since you are in so amiable a mood, perhaps I had better dine at the club. I hope you won’t refuse to shake hands with me.’

In this way they bade each other good-bye; he went downstairs, and out into the street.

‘Why can’t I leave her alone,’ he said to himself, as he walked down to Piccadilly, ‘and let her be as God made her? If I could get her to assume sincerity, it would still be an assumption. As it is, she has many good qualities; and sometimes exhibits a flash of sincerity that blinds one like lightning, so sudden and startling it is. Perhaps it is startling because it is unexpected.’

There was a hard smile on his face,

begotten of this thought, as he walked into his club in St. James's - street, went into the reading-room, and looked at the second edition of the *Times*. He did not see anything of the type before him ; or, at least, he had no sort of notion what the words meant. He was regarding mechanically a telegram which told of another despairing effort of Austria to pacify her incorrigible Czechs, but he was thinking of Mary Thormanby and her uncle and aunt.

‘She knows well why the old Major and his vulgar wife are so delighted to see me at dinner. She knows well what the proposal about a quiet little rubber after dinner means ; and she knows that though the Major and I pay in threepenny points, it is guinea points that have to be paid afterwards. She understands the Major’s little joke which always puts her and me as partners, while he and mother Delaney settle down to the plucking of their conscious victim. What an amiable young man they must consider me, thus to sit and lose sovereigns for the sake of playing

with their niece! And Mary knows that I see their coarse and obvious game; and I have caught her clear gray eyes glancing furtively at me at times, and I have seen a quick blush of shame covering her cheeks, as that awful old woman loudly claimed two by honours when Mary herself had played ace and queen. Yet they are content to play the open trick night after night; and it is only Mary who is sometimes driven by shame to protest against it. "Bless me!" says the fat old woman, with a giggle of wonder, "what a bad mimory I have! Sure I thought I played the queen!"'

He became aware at this moment that some one else wanted to look down the column of latest intelligence; so he moved an inch or two to one side, and recalled himself so far as to glance at the news. One of the paragraphs was as follows:

ST. NAZAIRE, Feb. 8.—*The brig Georgette, from Martinique to St. Nazaire, reports the total loss, in longitude 18° 10', of the ship*

Westmoreland, Captain Seaford, from Jamaica to London. The Westmoreland was caught in a heavy gale, and foundered, with all hands on board.

‘So that is the end of poor Tom Seaford,’ said Philip Drem, as he slowly left the room, ‘the kindly fellow, with the dark-blue eyes and the curly brown hair, who used to take me on his knee, and empty his pockets of all sorts of wonderful toys, and sing those famous old ballads. I must go along to my father and ask what he is going to do for Tom’s widow and child. He must do something for them; for I fancy he treated poor old Seaford very hardly when he was alive.’

The club-porter called a hansom; the young man stepped inside, and bade the cabman drive to Mincing-lane.

CHAPTER II.

IN MINCING-LANE.

WHEN Shanghai first became the El Dorado of English commerce, and boys at school were taught to long for ten years' penal servitude in China, as a sort of purgatory whence they should reach the modern heaven of unlimited wealth, Richard Drem went out to this land of promise, and found it amazingly fruitful. His constitution could stand any amount of heat—a fact which his fellow-clerks used to say promised well for his comfort in the next world. He was never guilty of any extravagance or folly; he was found to be an adept in bargaining with natives who are the greatest liars in the world, for he encountered them with their own weapons; and so pertinaciously did he stick to busi-

ness, that his becoming a partner, his setting up a firm for himself, and his gradually extending his commercial relations and forming agencies in all parts of the world, were steps of a career which followed each other with amazing swiftness. But while Richard Drem was yet making his way, there arrived in Shanghai a Spaniard named Esturiz, with his only daughter. What had tempted this old man, who was apparently poor and friendless, to seek his living in this remote climate, no one knows; nor can one well understand how Richard Drem first conceived the notion of marrying a girl who was penniless. There is reason to believe that the *Señorita Anna* was led to sacrifice herself, in order to gain for her unsuspecting father a situation in the house of which Richard Drem was now a junior partner. At all events they were married; and the young and handsome Spanish girl died in giving birth to a son. When Richard Drem, having founded the great firm of Drem & Co. in Yokohama, Canton, Melbourne, and Calcutta, returned

to London, Philip was a small boy of six or seven years of age.

Richard Drem was now a very important man. He was the luminous head of all the Drem family; and he was content to earn the pleasure of bestowing alms on his poor relations, if only they would keep at a distance, and not disgrace him before his London friends. Sometimes the unconscionable perversity of human nature made him rebel against the charity he gave, and the adulation that he reaped; and I believe that at such times he almost wished himself without a farthing, in order to spite these pests of claimants.

All his relations were not equally poor. There were the Seafords, for example, a Devonshire family, who were his cousins. It was shortly after his return to England that Richard Drem discovered that his cousin Tom Seaford, who had always been a roving and merry-hearted fellow, rather wild and given to all manner of mad pranks, had some years before completed the list of his offences by marrying a young

Devonshire girl, the daughter of a fisherman, or some other obscure person. Mr. Drem took it upon him to lecture Tom. His cousin, never very cautious in his language, not only spoke up for his wife, but added some phrases about Richard Drem which the latter never forgot or forgave. From that moment Tom Seaford became the object of Richard Drem's bitterest enmity, which soon showed itself in stirring up disturbances between Tom and his father, a weak old man, who was at last induced to forbid his son to come near the house. The rest of the story we need not enter into at present.

On this February afternoon Mr. Drem was seated in his private room, on the first-floor of the Mincing-lane offices. He was a short broad-built man, with a red irregularly-shaped face, and a mass of short thick white hair, that seemed to stand on end as it rose straight from his forehead. He was dressed in black, and he wore a snow-white neck-cloth.

Downstairs, as the early twilight made

the long mahogany-desked apartment look dusky and gray, there was profound silence, broken only by a cough or the scratching of a pen. The tea-, sugar-, coffee-, cotton-, jute-, and other brokers (who are the floats that tell the commercial angler when his bait has taken) had ceased to rush in frantically with bids; the business of the day was practically over; and a gentle state of coma had fallen over most of the clerks. The young gentleman nearest the door, whose papa had paid 500*l.* to have him placed on that tall stool, and whose business it was to answer inquiries, pay sugar-duties, and carry cheques to the ship-brokers, was pretending to add up the figures of certain landing-accounts, but was in reality busy in trying to sketch the face of a popular actress on his blotting-paper. He was thus engaged when the door of the office was gently opened, and a small slight woman, dressed in black, with a young girl by her side, entered.

She inquired timidly whether Mr. Drem were within. The young gentleman was

striving desperately to recall the likeness of the actress, which an unlucky touch at the end of the nose had somehow spoiled. The small woman with the gentle face, the singularly dark-blue eyes, and prematurely gray hair, again asked, in a timid way, if she could see Mr. Drem. The young gentleman threw down his pen, turned round, blushed violently when he saw, or fancied he saw, two ladies waiting on him, and then in a hasty manner said, 'Certainly,' opened the small door, and showed them upstairs.

They had no sooner gone upstairs than it suddenly occurred to the young gentleman that he had been guilty of the serious crime of sending some one upstairs unannounced; and he returned to his desk with a qualm at his heart. Down came the head-clerk from the other end of the office.

'Who are these people?' he asked coldly.

'I don't know, sir,' stammered the youth. 'I forgot—'

'Then don't forget yourself so far again.'

As he was going away he caught sight

of the actress's profile on the blotting-paper. He said nothing; but he quietly took up the sheet, tore it into fragments, threw them in the fire, and then gravely walked back to his desk. The young gentleman began to think that commerce was a despicable thing, and that his father should have sent him into the army or the church.

Mr. Ewart, the head-clerk, had no sooner returned to his desk than there came into the office Mr. Arthur Drem, Mr. Richard Drem's nephew, a small lean young man, with fair hair and gray eyes. His desk was opposite that of Mr. Ewart; and, as he hung up his hat, he said to the head-clerk:

‘Seen the second edition of the *Times*?’

‘No; Mr. Drem is not done with it yet.’

‘The Westmoreland has gone down.’

‘The Westmoreland!’

‘Yes; every nail in her has gone to the bottom.’

‘Thank God!’ said Mr. Ewart piously.

‘And every man too.’

‘Ah, I am sorry for that. But the

wreck is a great relief to me in the present state of the market.—Mr. Smith, be good enough to see what invoices you have by the Westmoreland, and give me a note of the quantities.’

Meanwhile the two strangers had gone upstairs, and paused irresolutely on the landing. One of them was a small middle-aged woman, whose soft brown hair, visible underneath her black bonnet, was streaked with gray. She had a pretty, rather sad face, with deep-blue eyes, a smooth forehead, and a fair complexion, somewhat tanned and freckled by the sun, even now in winter. She was dressed plainly and neatly in black. The other was evidently her daughter, and showed her mother’s prettiness transferred to the spring-time of youth and health. She was too young to be admired as a handsome woman; for there was an evidently girlish timidity in her manner and in the soft light of her eyes. Dark-blue eyes they were—of that intense, almost violet, blue which is at once so rare and so beautiful. She had over her

white forehead masses of wavy brown hair that had a gleam of gold in it; and the tender oval girlish face had a healthy pink glow, as bright, and yet as delicate, as the blush on a white sea-shell. It was a pretty face even in its soft immaturity—a pure trustworthy face, that only wanted time to give it repose and calm. It was in the eyes that the girlishness of Lilian Seaford's daughter chiefly showed itself—a half-frightened bird-like look that gave to the whole face an expression of innocence and youth, that spoke of the time when the soul is not yet familiar with the earth, and finds in all new things a wonder and a delight.

Mrs. Seaford tapped gently at the glass-door in front of her.

‘Come in,’ said a harsh and reedy voice.

She opened the door. Mr. Drem looked up from his desk with astonishment in his small eyes. When in that decorous office had two women unannounced ever presented themselves before him? He did not rise; he merely continued his stare, appar-

ently waiting for them to state the object of such an unprecedented intrusion.

‘I called, sir, to ask if you had heard anything yet of the Westmoreland,’ said the small woman with the timid voice and the gray hair.

‘You’ve come to the wrong place,’ he said curtly; ‘you must go to the ship-brokers.’ With that he turned to his desk, as much as to say: ‘Go to the ship-brokers, or the devil, only don’t bother me.’

‘I have been to the ship-brokers, sir,’ she said meekly.

‘And if they can’t tell you anything about the ship, how do you think I can?’ he asked with another stare.

‘I thought it possible you might have received some news,’ she said. ‘I came up from Devon six weeks ago to meet my husband; and I have waited to hear something about the ship, and I cannot hear anything.’

Richard Drem now turned himself round in his chair.

‘Are you then—’

‘Captain Seaford is my husband, sir.’

She spoke in a low tone, as if fearing to offend the great merchant, whom she had been taught to fear.

He, in turn, regarded her from head to foot, glanced at her daughter, and then said coldly,

‘O, indeed. Pray sit down; and I will ask about the Westmoreland.’

He whistled down a tube for Mr. Ewart, who forthwith presented himself.

‘How is it that these — ladies — have been sent up in this way?’

‘Mistake, sir, of Mr. Mowbray.’

‘Kick the young fool out of the place if he does it again—do you hear? What about this ship—this Westmoreland? Have you heard anything of her? She is from Jamaica — eh, eh? From Jamaica, isn’t she?’

‘The Westmoreland is—’

Somchow the man, happening to glance at the woman whose eyes were fixed upon him, paused. There flashed upon him a suspicion as to the object of her visit.

‘Well, well?’ said Richard Drem im-

patiently, apparently wishing the whole of them were where the Westmoreland lay at that moment. 'What is it?—what is it? Have you heard of the Westmoreland?'

The woman's frightened eyes had noticed his hesitation.

'You *have* heard,' she said, advancing a step towards him. 'Where is—the ship?'

'Madam, the Westmoreland is lost,' he said.

'Lost! And my husband?'

'The telegram says all on board were drowned,' said the man, knowing as he spoke that his words were killing all the joy that might yet have been possible to her in life.

'My husband dead!—dead!' she exclaimed, with a white seared face, and a strange look in her eyes, as if she were possessed—as if she were gazing out on the great sea, and striving to find something. 'O Lilian, Lilian, he is never coming back to us any more!'

She threw her arms round her daughter's neck, and hid her face from the light;

while the young girl sobbed with a vague apprehensive grief over a misfortune which she was scarcely capable of comprehending.

Mr. Ewart slipped downstairs unperceived; and Richard Drem came forward to his cousin's widow.

‘I am very sorry,’ he said. ‘I didn’t know. I hope you will bear up against it, now that it is past help, you know. He and I never got on well together; but we will let bygones be bygones, if you like. And if I can be of any assistance to you—’

The woman looked up and confronted him. The white face was now full of scorn, and the musical soft voice had grown harsh and cold.

‘From you? We are to take money from you, that murdered him? Ah, you look surprised; but you know that it is true; you know that it is you who have killed him. What harm did he ever do you that you lied and lied until you had him driven from his father’s house?—what did he ever do to you that you pursued him with your hate and malice until he

was cast off, until not one of his friends cared to know how my poor husband was fighting his way in the world? He had but two friends left; and now you have cut him off from us too; and we shall never see him any more. And now that you have done it—now that you have been successful—you would offer us your pity and assistance! — Lilian, come away — quickly; you are not safe so near the man who murdered your father and my poor husband.'

'Was the woman possessed?' asked Richard Drem of himself. There was a wild look in her eyes that had succeeded the appalling calm with which she had heard the tidings of her husband's death; and there was a violence in her manner strangely out of keeping with her slender physique and the timidity of her face.

While he stood there, astonished, bitterly annoyed, and growing rapidly angry, the woman seized her daughter's hand, and half dragged the girl out of the room. She shut the door behind her; and then the force of her indignation, that had so far sus-

tained her, gave way utterly. She caught the girl to her, and smoothed back the rich brown hair from her forehead, and kissed her tearfully, with incoherent expressions of fondness.

‘Let us go away from here, mamma,’ said Lilian Seaford. ‘The place frightens me. Let us go home.’

‘Home! We must never go home any more,’ said the poor woman, weeping bitterly, and thinking of the pleasant place in Devonshire where her young married life had been spent.

They went downstairs, through the office, and into Mincing-lane. As the two strangers looked around in a sort of bewildered way, they knew they were alone in London.

CHAPTER III.

TRINITY-SQUARE.

It was very seldom indeed that Mr. Philip honoured his father's offices in Mincing-lane with a visit. Sometimes he drove down in a hansom, and condescended to take the advice of Mr. Ewart upon money-matters. On these occasions he spoke but briefly to his pale-faced cousin, and never thought of going upstairs to see his father. Richard Drem was a man of business; and as the liberal allowance he gave his son was to be reckoned in figures just like anything else, the matter was transacted through the mediation of his head-clerk.

Sometimes, too, Mr. Philip, after having indulged somewhat too freely in whist or pool with Mary Thormanby's uncle, was forced to appeal to Mr. Ewart for help out

of his difficulties. This the head-clerk readily granted; and even ventured, in his grave paternal way, to hint that the young gentleman should be a little more careful about his money, and a good deal less extravagant. So far as the advice helped him to pecuniary relief Mr. Philip took it, and was negligently thankful; but where it referred to retrenchment he laughed it off in his careless way, much to the envy and chagrin of his cousin Arthur, who bitterly complained of the habits of this spoiled child of fortune, and perhaps thought every 50*l.* note which Philip received was so much taken out of the business, to which he, Arthur, secretly hoped to succeed. As for Philip Drem, he had no more notion than an infant of the value of money. He knew that a sovereign represented so many pairs of gloves, or a handful of cigars, or a few cab-fares; but he had no idea that it mattered whether he kept it or lost it. This sublime indifference was very aggravating to Richard Drem, as may well be understood. There was no great affection

existing between father and son; and Philip was never at any pains to conceal the estimation in which he held his parent's character.

It must be rather hard for a father to find himself being constantly called upon for cheques, and knowing that the recipient of them values him only as a sort of banker; that his money can purchase for him neither the respect nor the love of his son. Richard Drem gave Mr. Philip plenty of money, because it was befitting that his son should have the means, as well as the education, of a gentleman; but he occasionally rebelled against the young man's too open thanklessness; and accordingly the private life of the Drem family was sometimes marked by very pretty incidents. Mr. Drem, hot with wine and wrath, presiding at the dinner-table, and directing diverse insults at the head of his heir; the latter sitting dark and composed, with a look of haughty contempt on his face; and Mrs. Drem, Mr. Drem's second wife, timidly interfering, and begging Philip not to mind.

‘Mind?’ the young man would say. ‘Why should I mind? I have got accustomed to these symptoms of uneasy digestion; and he will remember nothing of them in the morning.’

When Mr. Philip did not visit the Mining-lane offices on account of money, it was to call on a little lame lad whom he had induced Mr. Ewart to take into his employ. This lad, by name Alec Lawson, was the grandson of an old Scotchman, living at Hampstead, with whom Philip Drem had become accidentally acquainted. Philip had taken a liking to the lame boy, and had not only got him a good place and a fair salary in the office, but he also used to interfere in a somewhat arbitrary manner with Mr. Ewart’s authority, and go down and carry off the lad for a day’s holiday whenever the whim entered his head. So it was that these two had become something of companions; the handsome, careless, good-natured favourite of fortune finding much novelty, doubtless, in the fellowship of this lame lad, whose pale face, large forehead,

prominent and strangely bright eyes, and clammy, white, blue-veined hands spoke of a highly sensitive and nervous temperament; while a certain restless look about the large liquid eyes told of a spirit too ardent for the delicate frame in which it was enshrined. Alec Lawson looked more like a Chatterton or Keats than one of the well-fed, well-conditioned, well-dressed young gentlemen around him; and one can understand that his appearance in such an office, and among such collaborators, would not have been a likely thing but for the fiat of Mr. Philip's somewhat imperious will.

When Mr. Ewart came downstairs, after having announced the loss of the Westmoreland, he told Mr. Arthur Drem who the strangers were who had gone up to see his uncle. The boy Lawson overheard their names, and knew that they were old friends of Philip Drem, the latter having often spoken to him about the pretty little woman down in Devonshire, who was a captain's wife, and had an only daughter.

By and by he saw them go out; and, as he was wondering whether Mr. Philip would now, after the lapse of many years, recognise his old friends, who should walk into the office but Philip Drem himself. Before he had time to push before him the little swinging door of the partition, the boy had gone over to him, and said, in an eager whisper:

‘Do you know who have just been here? —Mrs. Seaford and her daughter.’

‘Here! What did they want?’

‘I don’t know. They have this moment gone out.’

Without a word, Philip Drem turned and went hastily out of the office into Mincing-lane. The dusky thoroughfare was full of people, and at first a hurried glance up and down showed him no one at all answering to what he fancied the strangers ought to be like. He caught a glimpse, however, of two figures turning the corner into Great Tower-street, and these, after a moment’s hesitation, he followed. He soon overtook them, and a glance or two he

managed to get of their faces enabled him to identify them. He would not have recognised the young girl, so much had she grown and altered within the past few years; but the mother's face he remembered, even although the lines of gray were more frequent in the soft brown hair.

While he was yet debating how to accost them, they had gone along to the end of Tower-street, and were crossing Tower-hill towards Trinity-square. They had just left the pavement when a big hulking fellow, who was dragging along a little boy, cuffed the latter severely for having stumbled. The child set up a piteous cry, and the man was about to strike him again, when the young girl suddenly turned aside, put her hand on his arm, and said,

‘O, pray don’t do that!’

There was more of wonder than entreaty in her frank young face. She seemed not to understand why he should strike the child; and was as little prepared for his response to her interference. He shook

off her hand with a brutal oath, and looked as if he meant to strike her instead. She shrank away from him with a peculiar look of amazement and dread; as if she were at a loss to know why her good intention had so provoked him. She had gone forward naturally to save the boy from being beaten; and lo! it was not a man, but a wild-beast, that confronted her!

Seeing the frightened look of both the women, the scoundrel at once changed his tone, and began to beg for alms. He had eaten nothing for three days; neither had the boy beside him. Wouldn't they have pity on the poor—they who had their warm houses, and their plenty of meat? Then, as he saw they were gradually drawing away from him and nearing the pavement of Trinity-square, he altered his tone into a menace. They had no pity, then, for the poor? Weren't they ashamed to live on the fat of the land, and let other people starve? Did they mean to give him nothing?

With that, the widow tremblingly pulled

out her purse and was about to open it, when Philip Drem thought it was high time to interfere. He walked up to them.

‘Get out of the way!’ he said to the man, as he interposed between them.

As the scoundrel seemed not only unwilling to go, but determined to resent this interruption, the next minute found him a couple of yards off, stumbling over some rough granite, whither he had been sent by a remarkably significant shove. Indeed, so very pertinent was the message which this brief hint conveyed, that the man thought it prudent to remain where he had been flung, consoling himself with a good deal of unnecessary blasphemy.

‘Put your purse in your pocket, Mrs. Seaford,’ said Philip. ‘Don’t you know me?’

When she saw before her the son of the man whom she had just left, she drew back for a second; but then the remembrance of Philip as a boy seemed to dissociate him from his father, and she said hurriedly,

‘Yes, I know you, Mr. Philip; but I

do not wish to speak to any one. I wish to be alone with my poor girl.'

'But,' said Philip hesitatingly and respectfully, 'you are alone in London, are you not? Let me see you safely to the place where you are staying. You do not know London—'

There was a despairing look in the woman's face as she answered,

'No, we do not know London; and yet we must make our home here now. Six weeks ago, according to an old plan of ours, I sold off all our things down in Devon, and came up to meet my—my husband. So we have waited, and now—now I cannot go back—I cannot go back! We must remain in London.'

'And where are you staying now?' he asked.

'We lodge in that house over there,' said the young girl—whom Philip had scarcely noticed before—as she indicated a house on the north side of Trinity-square.

'And you are quite alone?'

'Yes.'

‘You have no friends in London?’

‘Not one,’ said Mrs. Seaford; but it was in a weary tone, which seemed to say that the want of friends was no great loss.

‘Then you must let me see about getting proper lodgings for you. You cannot remain in this dreary neighbourhood—it would kill you.’

‘That would not be much of a misfortune, perhaps,’ said the widow.

‘You must let me take you away from here,’ continued Philip, in his impetuous way. ‘I have a friend up at Hampstead who, I know, will be glad to receive you until you can get a more suitable place. What do you say? Suppose you go into the house, and tell them you will send for your things to-morrow.’

Seeing that the two strangers looked upon this proposal in a helpless and bewildered way, the young man coolly took the management of the affair into his own hands; and acted with a discretion beyond his years in giving the newly-made widow something to do, so as to distract her atten-

tion from her sorrow. He accompanied them into the house, saw the landlady, and bade her bring her bill.

‘I have no bill,’ said the stout person, ‘as they’ve paid reglar enough. But I’m entitled to two weeks’ notice.’

‘How much?’

‘Height shillings a week.’

Philip put his hand in his waistcoat-pocket, and threw a sovereign on the table.

‘Give the odd shillings to your servant.’

‘But you must not pay the money for me, Mr. Philip,’ said Mrs. Seaford, with more of wonder than resentment in her soft eyes.

‘You will pay me afterwards,’ he said curtly (for he was not in the habit of being interfered with); ‘and meanwhile I am going out to get a vehicle to take you up to Hampstead. I may be a quarter of an hour. You can in that time get ready whatever you want to take with you.’

With which he walked out of the house, and round to Mincing-lane. His father’s

brougham was at the door; and Richard Drem was coming out when his son met him.

‘I have a favour to ask from you, sir,’ remarked Mr. Philip, in his coldest and haughtiest manner.

Richard Drem stared. For his son to ask for a favour (even in so stiff a fashion) was sufficiently surprising.

‘Well—well?’

‘Would you mind driving home in a hansom, and lending me the brougham?’

‘You can’t be going to dinner at this hour—you are not dressed.’

‘I am going to pay a visit.’

‘Very well, take the brougham,’ said Richard Drem, as he turned into the office again to send a clerk for a cab.

Richard Drem was not displeased. He fancied his son was going to call at some house where a brougham would look better than a cab; and he was gratified to think that Philip, whose negligent habits often irritated him, was beginning to see the advantage of keeping up appearances.

‘Perhaps,’ thought the father, ‘he is going to visit Sir James. Ah, if he would only go less after that girl Thormanby, and take up with Violet Kingscote, one would be inclined to give him a dozen broughams to himself. Yet he has no notion of respectability. When I offered to give him a hansom for his own use, he did not even thank me, and prefers to go about town in these dingy vehicles, paying half-crowns, and risking infection.’

If Mr. Richard Drem had known that his fine carriage, with its pair of handsome horses, was then being driven round to Trinity-square, in order to take the widow and daughter of poor Tom Seaford to their new lodgings at Hampstead, he would not have been so willing to grant the favour asked of him by his son.

When Mrs. Seaford, accompanied by her daughter, came out of the house and saw waiting for her a brougham, with a coachman, footman, and pair of tall horses, she hesitated. But Mr. Philip took little heed of her hesitation; and so it was that,

in a second or two, the three were in the carriage and on their way to Hampstead.

During that long drive the young widow's eyes were far away and wistful. She saw the people and shops go past the window in a sort of dream; and she scarcely spoke a word. Philip forbore to break in upon her sad reverie, and was thus led into talking with the young girl who sat opposite him. He had now leisure to see how fair she was. Your true lover never sees a beautiful woman without comparing her with his own particular mistress, and endeavouring to prove to his own satisfaction the immense superiority of the latter. But the man must have been an idiot who could have compared the face of Mary Thormanby with that of this young Devonshire girl, whose lovely golden-brown hair, dark-blue eyes, and pretty mouth were perfect in their way. The beautiful hair was taken back from a forehead that was as white and smooth, though not so low, as that of Clytie; and the eyes, large and dark in hue, were shaded with long eye-lashes. Philip

confessed that Lilian Seaford was a good deal prettier than his mistress of the saucy eyes and the irregular, pale, fascinating face; but while the one had the attractions of a woman, the other had only the pretty *naïveté* of a child. The violet eyes met his glances without fear and without scruple. There was no self-consciousness in her face. She spoke to him in her direct simple fashion as though he had been an old man, or an old woman, or anything rather than a handsome young gentleman of twenty-four. There was timidity, but no trace of shyness, in her manner. When his dark eyes met hers she neither glanced downward nor betrayed any signs of embarrassment. Indeed, he saw that she was sometimes wholly oblivious of his presence, and that her face bore the expression of a strange trance-like forgetfulness and absence, which he was in after times to study with curiosity and wonder. Were transmigration of souls possible, you could have believed that within the mask of this pretty young creature there lurked the spirit of a wood-pigeon,

and that, after she had spent a few minutes in looking at you with a strange, bird-like, frightened observation and curiosity, she had flown right away into some other realm of perpetual summer and sunshine and blue sky.

So they drove on towards Hampstead, and Philip scarcely remembered that he had not dined. He would have devoted the afternoon, however, with more equanimity to this present freak of generosity had he left Mary Thormanby in a more amiable mood. If he could but have snatched five minutes to go and beg her forgiveness, how gladly he would have done so! He was inwardly laughing at himself for his own weakness, when the carriage was pulled up at the small green gate of the garden in front of James Lawson's house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HAMPSTEAD HERMITAGE.

OLD James Lawson, who now sits, with shaggy white hair and keen eyes, over a book at his own fireside, was at one time a Kirkintilloch weaver, when hand-loom weaving was a lucrative calling. ‘Jims,’ as his neighbours called him, was known as a man of great probity and of a very fierce temper. But his temper, instead of expending itself in his own home, sought relief in getting up bitter and vigorous opposition to anything or anybody out of doors. Needless to say, Jims was at once a Radical and a Seceder; and the prime of his manhood was spent in stirring times, when there was plenty of occasion for his angry invective and his fearless action. In 1843, when half the national church of

Scotland went out in Secession, Jims was one of the most active and vigorous of the lay agitators who protested against patronage. He left himself without a shilling in getting up the rough rudiments of the great sustentation-fund for the relief of the ministers. Two years later came the Puseyite squabble, which was looked upon in Kirkintilloch as a demonstration of the Scarlet Woman, and denounced vehemently. Then came the anti-corn-law agitation, the railway mania and panic of 1845, and the Chartist riots of 1848. Stirring times, indeed! And the short thickset weaver, whose shaggy eyebrows were then black, and his sallow face, powerful and dark, lighted up by two piercing eyes, was a terror to his more timid neighbours. Jims was bitter of speech; and the scorn and reproach he dealt out to those around him who were weak-kneed or trimmers caused many to dread contact with the village Cato. A man who could look upon the cholera visitation of 1849 as a judgment of God upon the people that had misdi-

rected, thwarted, and killed the national aspirations for liberty of the previous year, was not likely to stay his hand or tongue in censuring private delinquencies.

In the midst of his various activities, Jims was struck dumb by a family misfortune. His only daughter was betrayed, and went to Glasgow but to die of her shame, leaving behind her an infant, whom Mrs. Lawson adopted. Jims was heard to say that a man who could not rule his own household was unfit to pass a judgment on the conduct of his neighbours; and from that day he never opened his lips to speak harshly of any human being. Indeed, he was so overwhelmed with shame and grief that he could not lift up his head; and in the end he was driven to take refuge in London, bringing with him his wife and grandson, and the relics of his household gods. Times were now changed. Handloom weaving, in the large towns, was practically extinct. With what little money he had saved, Jims opened a hosiery shop in Tottenham-court-road; and so well did

he succeed, and so thriftily did his wife manage his domestic affairs, that they had now been able to retire into this small cottage at Hampstead to pass the rest of their days in peace. Their grandson Alec — now a lad of fourteen — was also receiving 80*l.* a-year from Drem & Co., so that he was no charge to them.

It had been one of the whims of Mr. Philip to prosecute the acquaintance with old James Lawson which he had casually made. There was something very novel and striking to the young man, who had been brought up in the half-sceptical atmosphere of modern society — who had been taught to regard politics as a diversion for wealthy men of middle age, and as a game played between two parties — who had been accustomed to that tone of despair with which even many thoughtful men speak of the inability of mere legislation to cure the evils of this country, — it was something novel and striking for him to find a man who not only believed that these evils were curable,

but who firmly believed and maintained that the cure for them was withheld by the interested upper classes. Jims, in his way, was both a prophet and a politician. He mourned with the desolation of a Jeremiah over the condition of the poor; and he attacked the strongholds of the rich with a fine confidence in his means worthy of a Saint Simon. The prophet (and we have several at present) who merely bewails the present condition of things, and pours out his scorn and indignation over our institutions and ourselves, is liable to be much disturbed by the practical question, What do you want? But Jims could tell you at once what he wanted, and back up his demands by an array of facts and figures, which lost none of their weight as you looked at the rough and powerful face, the shaggy white hair, and piercing eyes.

Mr. Philip was in no danger of becoming a pupil of this fierce old man. He dared to dispute many of Jims's facts; and his smattering of college lore enabled him

to see that Jims's vehement logic was very often faulty. But Philip Drem liked to visit the old man to catch the infection of belief from him. It is something in these days to have the conviction that a man may achieve an actual good for his fellow men, by working at this or that piece of legislation, or even by demonstrating the rottenness of this or that portion of our political system. Philip came from time to time to steal a little of that patriotic fire which Jims kept perpetually burning on his domestic altar. But while the old man would have had him set our whole constitution in flames with it, as a rotten and effete thing, the young man only took it as a sort of torch to lighten his way and give confidence to his feet. You must look at his position before you see the necessity for his getting these occasional flashes of inspiration. Young, strong, handsome, rich, there was no necessity for his doing anything beyond enjoying himself. But more important than the natural wish for personal enjoyment possessed by

every healthy young man, was the universal example of the people among whom he had been brought up, and with whom he associated. The young men of his acquaintance dismissed politics as a nuisance, and did not understand convictions about anything beyond the condition of horses, the quality of cigars, and the style of their feminine friends. The admirable theory of leaving well alone was the obvious principle on which the vast majority of the people around him fashioned their lives. If there was any real worship among them, it was the worship of the great god Comfort. They were not responsible for the condition of affairs out of doors; they moved within their own spheres, and let political men fight about parliamentary bills as they might. Even at Cambridge, where he fell in with a political clique, and became a theoretical Radical, there were vague philosophic notions wandering hither and thither about the necessary results of competition, the natural recovery of the lost balance, the virtue of the stronger

force, and so on. These and other influences, to be detailed hereafter, were hard to withstand. That he did withstand them at all was mainly owing to the impulse he received from James Lawson's fervent faith; but even in permitting himself to be warmed into something like a belief, he had to recognise the fact that Jims himself was far from being infallible, and was on some points manifestly absurd.

Jims received the two strangers into his parlour with the grave courtesy and dignity of a Highland chief. But he had no sooner heard from Philip the peculiar circumstances under which they had visited him, than he summoned Mrs. Lawson, who was downstairs in the kitchen. When the homely kind-faced Scotchwoman came up, Jims confided the widow and her daughter to her care, and bade her take them to her own room. He added in a whisper as they were going out:

‘Leave them to themselves, gudewife, and don’t you bother them wi’ your consolations. See that you put a Bible in

the room, and dootless they'll find help there.'

When they had left, he turned with a sharp glance of inquiry to Philip.

'They're no Romans, are they?'

'I fancy not; although there are a good many Catholics in Devon. I don't suppose it matters much.'

'Not to you o' this generation, perhaps,' said Jims, with something like a frown. 'And so there's another vessel wrecked. What was in her?'

'Rum, probably, and sugar, and what not.'

'Hadn't your fayther enough o' rum and sugar and spices? I wonder, does he ever go down on his knees and ask God to give him another stomach?'

'Well, I don't suppose he intended eating any of the raw produce of the Westmoreland.'

'No; he wanted to hand the stuffs on to the people who adulterate them for the poor, himself levying a pretty black-mail on them as they passed. Don't you think

it is a pretty trade, Mr. Philip—sitting at a desk and making hundreds of pounds by the scratching of a pen? What does your father do for the world? He can't make a shoe or a spoon; he can't help a blade of grass to grow; he produces nothing; but while other people are toiling and working and sweating, he sits at a table wi' a quill pen in his hand, and grasps more money in a day than a score o' them could do in a year.'

'You are in one of your unreasonable moods to-night, Mr. Lawson,' said Philip quietly. 'I don't admire my father's trade, but I fancy it is a good deal more necessary than the making of shoes or spoons. One might make shoes and spoons at home; but when one has to import produce from abroad, there is expensive machinery needed, and people capable of running a great risk, for which they must be paid proportionately. But I suppose you are joking.'

A prophet never jokes. The sense of humour is fatal to prophecy; and Jims,

in every other way a thorough Scotchman, had not the faintest notion of humour.

‘Unreasonable! Ay, unreasonable as Micah was unreasonable,’ he grumbled, ‘when he said, “Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds—when the morning is light they practise it, because it is in the power o’ their hand. They covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away; so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.”’

‘I don’t know whose fields my father has been coveting; and I think the heavier toll he lays upon the rum that passes through his hands, the better,’ said Philip. ‘But suppose you leave that aside, and tell me what we are to do for these two poor creatures upstairs. You have a couple of spare rooms, haven’t you?’

‘Yes.’

‘Let them to me for 50*l.* a-year, and allow Mrs. Seaford and her daughter to use them as long as they like. Will you?’

‘Mr. Philip,’ said Jims, with a touch of

pride, 'if I am to be paid for offering the shelter of my roof to a widow and her child, it is time, I think, I should give up my talk about the things that are happening around us.'

'If you put it in that way, yes. I would not seek to bribe Jonah from going up against Nineveh; but still I do not see why you should not let me make a mercantile transaction of it. The habit runs in my family, if it does not in yours.'

'We are sufficiently beholden to you already,' said Jims, 'for what you have done for our Alec. I hope you will say nothing more about this. Let a poor man have the dignity of his own house, and the privilege of offering its security to those who need it. If these two women are, as you say, without any means, you may do your share in getting them work of some kind or other, such as suits the dainty stomachs of people brought up genteelly who find themselves in poverty.'

'Well,' said the younger man, with a laugh, and stretching out his legs before

him, 'when I undertook to find lodgings for them, I did not contemplate accepting the responsibility of finding them the means of existence. But, upon my life, I don't see what I could do better, by way of employment. I should have the pleasure of tangible results: and that is more than I am likely to get by writing pamphlets on the tenure of land, isn't it, Mr. Lawson?'

'Yes, when you write them the wrong way,' growled Jims.

It is needless to say that Jims went in for wholesale confiscation. The land belonged to the State; and the State was bound to see that no fictitious theory of absolute ownership should be allowed to interfere with the rights of every subject to participation.

'But,' Philip would mildly urge, 'if a man invests his savings in land, as he might in consols, under the security granted by certain laws, and if the State resolve to abrogate these laws, is it not bound to give him compensation?'

'Why?' Jims would ask with his face

and eyes aglow. 'If the State — that is, the whole of us—have made a blunder, in heaven's name let us rectify it, whoever suffers. And the land-owners have had the benefit of the blunder hitherto,' he would add, with a bitter emphasis.

Whatever effect Jims's fierce theories had upon Mr. Philip, there can be no doubt about their having been a powerful alterative. If they did not give one new convictions, they shook up those one had in a far from Socratic manner; and many a time Philip 'was provoked into the malicious pleasure of advancing some very milk-and-watery theory of popular rights, merely to observe Jims's explosive scorn and anger. This was very wrong, doubtless; but perhaps we are ceasing to reverence age as we ought to do. She-bears no longer interfere to teach our children respect for a bald head.

There was a timid tap at the door, and Lilian Seaford stood hesitatingly at the entrance to the room.

'Mamma wishes to be alone,' she said, 'and so I have come downstairs.'

‘Quite right, quite right,’ said Jims. ‘Come in and sit by the fire. Where is my gude wife?’

‘She went to make some tea, I think,’ said the girl.

‘Ay, ay. When women are in trouble, they are sure to fly to tea. Sit ye down in the arm-chair, and make yourself comfortable. You are young to meet wi’ so sore a trial; but young hearts are light, and get ower these things. No,’ he added suddenly, seeing that tears had sprung into the girl’s eyes, ‘dinna think I blame you for’t. If you live long enough, you’ll have plenty of trouble without wishin’ to multiply what you meet wi’ now. Think as little of it as you can, my lassie—that is my advice to you; and dinna blame yourself if you find your young heart gets more quickly over sorrow than theirs who are older than you. You will see some day that life wasna given us to spend in vain lamentations and regret.’

The girl sat and stared vacantly into the fire. The absence of her bonnet now

revealed the plenteousness and beauty of her waving sun-brown hair, the rebellious folds of which were tightly banded down over the small neat head; and the closely-fitting dress showed her slight, lissome figure, which was singularly well-formed, to be that of a girl of sixteen. Jims laid his hand tenderly and softly on the young girl's head, and said,

'You maun be brave and bear up, my lassie, for you will have to help your mother and lighten her grief; and young shoulders were made to prop old arms. You maun show yourself a woman now, and make some return for all she has done and suffered for you. And here comes your tea, which I suppose will be as welcome to you as to your elders.'

Mrs. Lawson, having already been to the lonely woman upstairs, now carried the tray into the room herself, and made a pretty display of biscuits, jam, marmalade, and the other delicacies peculiar to the afternoon meal of small households. Alec also came in, having arrived from the City;

and so they all sat down to the table, Lillian Seaford instinctively drawing near the motherly woman who had spoken so kindly to her.

The shadow of sudden death—that most pathetic of all the sacrifices demanded by human fate—still hung over them; yet Philip and Jims managed to introduce some cheerfulness into their talk, by way of beguiling the thoughts of the sensitive young girl beside them. They asked her questions about Devonshire, about her first impressions of London, about what she had seen since her arrival. But she had seen scarcely anything. She and her mother had remained pretty much in their lodgings, waiting for him who was never to sail into port again.

Jims then began to speak to Lillian of what she ought to do in the event of her and her mother making Hampstead their permanent home. The girl exhibited a prudence and sense in replying to these remarks which one would scarcely have expected from her; and it was only at

times that Philip observed her sudden withdrawal from the conversation, as she relapsed into a trance-like fixity of vision, which impressed him as something strange, new, almost terrible. The girl seemed to see nothing and hear nothing. The large violet-blue eyes were intently fixed upon some insignificant object; and then, after a few seconds, or even minutes, you saw her recover herself with an effort and a start, as if she were forcing herself awake. Then she looked around, as if she had newly come into a strange room, among strange people, and as if some concentration were necessary before she could take up the thread of their talk.

Philip sat there till nearly nine o'clock; and then he left. When he went outside, it was a clear starlit night, with the moon just beginning to show herself in the south; and as he had effectually done himself out of his dinner, he resolved to walk all the way down to Park-lane, there being nothing better for him to do.

When he arrived there, instead of going

at once into his father's house—a large stone-built mansion near the Oxford-street end of the lane—he walked down to the front of the considerably smaller residence inhabited by Major Delaney, his wife, and niece. There was the drawing-room window, at which he had been standing that forenoon along with Mary Thormanby, when the envious demon who dogs the footsteps of lovers hurried them into bitter speech and an angry parting. A dull red light came through the curtains inside the French window; and he heard the sound of music. It was Mary, who was playing a march he knew well. He was familiar with every chord in it; but now, as he heard it from a distance, there was less of stately and measured triumph in it, and more of the sadness and tenderness of parting. Perhaps she, too, was thinking of him as she played—perhaps remembering her attitude of the morning with some compunction, and wishing for a few words of reconciliation and kindness. Should he go round and enter? The Major and his wife

scorned ceremony, where a rich young gentleman was concerned. He had taken greater liberties with social custom in their house, without rebuke. Perhaps Mary would thank him with her wonderful gray eyes, and give him a flower in token of forgiveness.

What suddenly upset Mr. Philip's present mood it would be hard to say. But he suddenly muttered something which had a wicked sound, turned on his heel, and, with a bitter laugh at his own folly, walked rapidly up the lane and entered his own house.

Somewhat later on that night Lilian Seaford was awake by a strange cry. Hastily starting up, she became aware that the room was full of moonlight, that streamed in from the small window; and this light showed her her mother, sitting in the bed beside her, with an unearthly whiteness on her face, and a ghastly fixity in her eyes.

'There, there!' cried the woman, pointing to the window, 'don't you see it, Lilian? don't you see it?—the ship is heav-

ing over, and they are crying for help! Why does the wind howl so? for nobody will hear. See, Lilian, see!—the waves—the waves—the waves—and, O my God, he has gone down!

‘Mamma, mamma, what do you mean?’ cried the frightened girl.

The woman’s eyes gradually lost that wild intensity; she began to tremble violently, and then she seemed to become aware of her daughter’s presence. With a great shudder of fear, she drew the girl towards her, and burst into a flood of tears, as she held her close to her bosom.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. DREM'S DINNER-PARTY.

‘PHILIP,’ said Mrs. Drem in her insidious way, ‘shall I ask Mary Thormanby and her aunt and uncle to come on Thursday next? You know your papa doesn’t like them; but, if it would please you to have them here, I will send them a card.’

Mrs. Drem was a small, pale, flaxen-haired woman, with the gentlest of voices, and a manner which she meant to be very captivating and pleasing. She was much younger than her husband, whose coarse bearing and captious temper she bore with a sweet equanimity. She had been a poor relative of a very good family when he married her; and, when she was suddenly lifted into wealth and luxury, instead of becoming haughty to her neighbours and

imperious to her servants, she strove to fulfil the duties of her station with a persistence that was almost touching. True, the marriage had not brought Mr. Drem into communication with all those families of whose friendship she had been accustomed to boast in her days of maidenhood; and her husband was cruel enough at times (when afire with port-wine and ill-temper) to say that she had told him a pack of lies about her grand friends, and that she was a deceitful hypocrite; but, once his wife, there was nothing she did not do to accomplish the full measure of her obligations.

Among other things, she set to work to spoil her step-son, until Master Philip was fairly nauseated into rebelling against her officious kindness. He was not nearly so grateful to her as he ought to have been for her servile humouring of his boyish whims; for her profuse and secret presents; or for the way in which she endeavoured to smooth down the somewhat rough relations existing between father and son. Her

kindness and Philip's ingratitude came to a head at Eastbourne, while Philip was still a boy. He was accustomed to walk along the beach with her every morning before breakfast; and it was their chief amusement, as they strolled along, to watch the curious odds and ends of things that the sea had washed up during the night—bits of lobster-baskets, empty night-lights, a cut lemon, a soda-water bottle, a leaf of the New Testament, or an old shoe. Philip, much to his surprise and delight, used sometimes to find more valuable things than those; and, of course, one estimates at twenty times its worth any stray bit of flotsam and jetsam so picked up. The frequency of the findings, however, provoked the boy's suspicions; and, on a certain morning, he caught one of the servants coming up from the beach just as Mrs. Drem and he were going down. He wondered what the man had been doing there; but said nothing. His step-mother and he had not proceeded far on their accustomed beat when he detected something gleaming

out of the sand, and partly hidden by the seaweed.

‘What is it, Philip?’ says Mrs. Drem with a pretty surprise.

He picks up the shining object, clears away the sand, and finds a spick-and-span new purse, of red morocco, with a fine brass rim.

‘What a lucky boy you are!’ exclaims Mrs. Drem in her quiet sweet voice. ‘Since we have come down here, you have found such a lot of things—a penknife, a silver dog-whistle, a sovereign, and what not; and now here is a purse!’

‘Yes; isn’t it strange that the sea should be so strong as to float these things in?’ says the boy. ‘But I think I can explain the mystery; for I happened to see this purse on your dressing-table yesterday afternoon.’

Mrs. Drem crimsoned for a moment, like a ‘caught’ school-girl; then she burst out laughing, and asked him if he was not very grateful to her. Philip’s face showed that he was rather disgusted. As he was

only a boy, one is not sure whether his disgust was occasioned by her cringing to him and fostering his weakness, or by the discovery that he had *not* really found the articles in question. At all events, that little circumstance did Master Philip a world of good. He got fairly ashamed of being spoiled; and resented his step-mother's efforts in that direction as if they were so many insults. They were always very good friends; but he seemed to regard her with a certain coldness and suspicion ever after the incident of the purse.

Mrs. Drem now waited for Mr. Philip to say whether she should send a card for her dinner-party to the people whom her husband disliked. What her own feelings in the matter were, no one could say; for it was at all times a difficult matter to discover Mrs. Drem's likes and dislikes. In the sweetest manner she would have asked Satan to give her his arm down to dinner, had either Mr. Drem or Philip invited him to the house.

‘Do as you please,’ he said, without

lifting his eyes from his book, or uncrossing his legs, as he sat at his study-fire. 'I don't care.'

'You don't care, my dear!' said Mrs. Drem with surprise. 'And if you don't care whether Miss Thormanby is asked, who should?'

'I have not seen Miss Thormanby for some days,' he said carelessly.

'A lover's quarrel, I suppose,' remarked Mrs. Drem with a sweet smile.

'Do you think we are babies? People don't take the trouble to quarrel nowadays; it would disturb one's appetite for lunch.'

Mrs. Drem said no more, but went gently out of the room and betook herself to her desk. Her first act was to inscribe some names on a couple of gilt cards; and then she said to herself, smiling at her own thoughtfulness, 'If it is a quarrel, poor Philip will thank me for bringing about a reconciliation. His father would rather have the quarrel continued, that Philip might be induced to marry Violet; but then he need not know anything about it.'

And Philip may not marry Mary Thormanby after all.'

The gilt cards were put in envelopes, and addressed in Mrs. Drem's formal small handwriting, which she had carefully cultivated in the few months preceding her marriage. Thus it was that, among the guests who arrived at Mr. Drem's house on Thursday evening, Major and Mrs. Delaney and Miss Thormanby were included.

They were not among the first arrivals. Long before Mr. Philip had begun to glance expectantly to the door every time it was opened and some name announced, Mrs. Drem's drawing-room had been pretty well filled by those groups of twos and threes that somehow get together in the awkward time preceding dinner. Tall men stood upright in the middle of the floor, sulky and silent; short men bore up at them with some feeble endeavour to win them into conversation, and were looked down on with contemptuous silence; the ladies were all talking together on couches and chairs, while even the youngest of them disdained

to think of flirting for a few resultless minutes. If there was anything like flirtation, it was on the part of a small bright young lady, who had a neat round English face, with jet-black hair brushed tightly down over her forehead, and who was engaging in lively talk two young gentlemen. This was Miss Violet Kingscote, and one of her attendants was Mr. Philip, who responded to her sallies with a sort of grave paternal forbearance.

Miss Kingscote was evidently being 'cornered' in some playful argument or other; for she suddenly broke away, with a pretty gesture of her head, and said to her cousin,

'I can forgive you, Cecil, for being a Radical, but not Philip, for he is tall enough to be a Conservative. You never find Radicals above five feet six, do you?'

Lord Cecil Sidmouth, the younger son of a well-known Conservative peer, and one of a band of young aristocratic Radicals who had formed themselves into a philosophico-political society (of which more hereafter), was in reality about five feet six,

had a large protuberant forehead, red hair, an eye-glass, and gloves much too big for him. He took his eye-glass between his finger and thumb, and said,

‘Do you know, Violet, you are becoming abominably impertinent? You, who represent the lofty school of politics, ought to be more courteous to your enemies. The weapons of personality are left to us. If I am only five feet six, and therefore a Radical, it is the fault of my ancestors, who were all Conservatives; and, if it comes to that, I think you yourself are the smallest creature in this room. I don’t say you are the less valuable on that account; for I think it was a remark of our Radical poet Burns, when asked why God had made a certain young lady very small, that—’

‘O Philip, save me!’ she cried. ‘I can tell when he is settling down into the long swinging canter of a Union speech—’

‘I was going to pay you a compliment, you ungrateful creature!’ said the grave red-headed young lord, fixing his eye-glass again.

‘And after what I said of you, it was very kind, Cecil; and I will never do so any more,’ she said contritely.

Violet Kingscote’s bright and pleasant face suddenly grew reserved and formal; for she had caught the gray eyes of Mary Thormanby regarding her, as the latter entered the room, accompanied by her uncle and aunt. The two girls had never spoken to each other; but such instinctive antagonisms are common among women, and are easily traceable in the alteration of a look.

Miss Thormanby did not show to her best advantage in thus entering a room and confronting a lot of strangers. When her features were frozen into rest in this way, you could see that they were obviously not beautiful, while there was a coldness about her expression which was somewhat forbidding. It was when she was in close and confidential conversation with one person that her face lit up and showed its special charm. Nor was any man who had had this peculiar fascination revealed to him

ever after able to see that she was plain. Hence it was that people who had only seen her as she walked about a room, could not be made to understand why their gentleman-friends raved about Mary Thormanby; while girls were no less puzzled when they looked at the photograph of this lady who won so much enthusiasm, and declared that she was positively ugly. But the beauty that enslaves is not the beauty of a perfect outline; nor will it be ever understood until physiology and æsthetics agree to make the inquiry together.

When Philip had shaken hands with Major Delaney and his wife he turned to their niece; and in a quite frank and courteous way said,

‘Suppose, Mary, we agree to forget all that passed the other day; will you?’

The big gray eyes regarded him for a second or two with a calm indifference, as she said,

‘I need not pretend to forget when I cannot help remembering.’

A flush crossed the young man’s face,

and he turned away abruptly, almost rudely, from her. He went back to Miss Kingscote.

‘What is the matter with you, Philip?’ asked that young lady.

‘Surprise,’ he said, with a bitter smile. ‘I have just learnt that there is something about which Miss Thormanby cannot make a pretence.’

Miss Violet discreetly said nothing, but turned to Cecil and began asking questions about the naughty philosophical society, against which certain very respectable newspapers were protesting strongly.

At length dinner was announced; and Mrs. Drem, thinking she had sufficiently consulted Philip’s wishes in inviting Mary Thormanby and her relatives, had arranged, as a sort of propitiation to Mr. Drem, that Philip should take in Violet Kingscote to dinner. So it was that these two came together; and that the pretty, dark-haired, matter-of-fact young English lady found herself talking to a somewhat absent and preoccupied companion. Occasionally, in-

deed, she had to remind him of his duty; and to recall him from scowling vaguely at a certain couple far down the table.

‘I tell you, you are losing all your manners,’ she said, ‘since you have taken to politics. You used to care for nothing but to please people, and you even condescended to be agreeable to me. And seriously, Philip, you know you can do no good in what you and Cecil talk about; and why should you annoy yourself to no purpose? I know a good deal of politics. I know that, to gain political power, you have to flatter a lot of vulgar and rude people, and make them believe that you have no care at heart but to obey their stupid wishes. You must pander to their prejudices in order to get into Parliament; and there you become the slave of this faction or that, and are only a voting unit. You needn’t laugh, Philip; women *do* read more of the newspapers than the “births, deaths, and marriages;” and any one can tell what politics really mean at present. You may be a Radical in theory, but how *could* you con-

sort with such people? You would not understand them; they would not understand you. Do you know who is the great Radical down in Wisborough?’

‘Who?’

‘Why, that dreadful man Tring. Do you know that he is both a dissenting preacher and the agent of a fire-insurance office?’

‘What more natural? You see he is able to insure you at the same time against fire in both worlds.’

‘I will not have you say such things to me.’

‘And I will not have you say such things to me. Don't you understand the part you are playing, in trying to sap my patriotic resolutions? To me you represent the world, the flesh, and the Conservative party; and you bring all the battery of your seductive persuasion to bear upon a young man who has plenty of foes to fight from within. For how do I know that it *is* of any use? And how do I know that the opinions of all my best friends are wrong,

and that the opposite opinions held by many people whom I dislike are right? Is not everybody born in England sufficiently ready to judge of an opinion by the social position of those who advance it, that you, with your sly logic and your pretty eyes, should step in to play the siren? If you and I were not such old friends—if we were not such good friends as to make falling in love and that sort of nonsense impossible between us—I should have to surrender all my best resolves to you. As it is, I defy you, Miss Violet!

‘That’s all very well,’ said his companion, ‘and I wouldn’t care a bit what sort of opinions you had, if they did not alter you. But you are really, Philip, being drawn more and more away from us. You are not one of us as you used to be. I think papa begins to regard you as rather a dangerous person; and I know he says that the Analytical Society should be put down by law.’

All this time her companion had been furtively looking down the table as he

played with his knife and fork ; and what he saw there did not seem to please him much. Mary Thormanby, conscious that he was looking at her, did her best to show off her fascinations to Philip's pale cousin Arthur, who sat next to her. Had her only object been to captivate that remarkably matter-of-fact person, she would probably have relinquished her endeavour in disgust ; but she knew that every time she smiled and showed her beautiful teeth, every glance of her big gray eyes directed to the unimpressible Arthur, every pretended little confidence between them, told somewhat higher up the table. It was not the ordinary pangs of jealousy, however, that Philip suffered—it was a far less bitter and a far sadder feeling.

‘She knows that I see all this,’ he said to himself, ‘and that I know her coquetry to be merely a pretence. She has no interest whatever in my cousin. She knows that I am in love with her, and that I despise myself for being in love with her ; and she wishes me to see that she can dare

me to break the bonds that hold us together.'

'You are very silent, Philip,' said Miss Kingscote. 'Are you thinking of what I have been saying? Do you mean to come back to us?—to leave your friends of the mob and the hustings, and become again one of your own people?'

'I was thinking of something quite different, Violet,' he said. 'Tell me; do you think a man can continue to love a woman whom he despises?'

'He cannot love her at all if he despises her,' said Violet.

'That is nonsense,' he said abruptly. 'That is one of the parrot sayings that all the essayists on the affections repeat. It is like the superstition about a man's only being able to love once, and like the other superstition about love making one careless as to the defects in the character of the person you love. Why, it is only when you have a great regard for some one that you take the trouble to wish she were better—that you see where she is imperfect and

would like to improve her. It is no concern of mine if Mrs. Delaney makes a fool of herself with her head-dress, or if Lady O'Mallory remarks that Milton's enchanting poem of *Paradise and the Peri* was the best thing he ever wrote. But suppose you are deeply interested in some one—suppose you are fascinated by glimpses of a fine nature in some man or woman, and yet you see this nature perverting itself and lending itself to mean deceptions and paltry tricks—suppose you see one you cannot help loving glorying in a sort of self-degradation, and sneering at you for thinking that he or she ought to be better—'

'And could you love any one with such a disposition?' asked Miss Kingscote, turning towards him her bright dark eyes.

'That is the very fun of it,' said Philip. 'I think I do.'

Now it was none of Violet Kingscote's business to interfere in this matter. She knew well to whom her companion referred. Everybody expected Philip Drem to marry

Mary Thormanby; and although Violet, with her wilful little prejudices and her sharp eyes, had formed a considerable dislike to the lady of Philip's choice, she did not quite believe all the ill of her that her companion had just hinted. It was none of her business; and besides, Miss Kingscote was a practical young lady. She liked to have a pleasant time at dinner; and she certainly thought that the gentleman who sat next her was bound to study her pleasure instead of bothering her about his love affairs.

‘You mean you have had a quarrel, Philip,’ she said; ‘and I don't know about these things. But I think men are more impatient with the women they love than with other women, merely because they know more of them. They have studied them more, and know their weaknesses; while other women come near them with a thin veil of courtesy and formality to hide them. Don't you know that boys always fancy their sisters are very deceitful—far more deceitful than other girls—merely be-

cause they know so much of them? But when they get to know other women, they begin to see that their sisters are no worse than the rest.'

'Well, Miss Violet,' said Philip, with a laugh, 'your candour about your own sex is charming. But it is too bad of me to bore you with my sorrow. Suppose we talk of something else. And it has occurred to me that I have a great favour to ask of you. And first I will tell you a story.'

With that he began and told her all about the loss of the Westmoreland, and the fortunes of Tom Seaford's widow and daughter. Miss Thormanby grew less fascinating towards the unresponsive Arthur, when she saw that Philip was so much engrossed as to pay her no attention. The babble around the table increased. Mary Thormanby's corpulent and vulgarly-dressed aunt kept rallying the small, sweet, patient Mrs. Drem; and Mrs. Drem conducted herself towards her jocose and bouncing neighbour with the sort of silent contempt with

which a well-bred minnow might look on the gambols of a frolicsome tadpole. Pretty much the same state of affairs prevailed between the Major and Sir James Kingscote, the tall gray-haired man, with the keen hard face, who vainly tried to ignore the burly warrior, and devote his attentions to one of those silent and depressing young ladies who fill up the blanks of all dinner-tables.

Mr. Drem had grown very red and very sulky. He kept an eye on the servants and on Mrs. Drem; and visited her with an occasional glance of impatient anger whenever the former seemed dilatory or negligent. A sprightly young married lady endeavoured to engage the great merchant in conversation from time to time, and sometimes managed to elicit a sort of half-contemptuous growl, which may have resembled the kind of language in vogue in pre-Adamite times, when the 'missing link' was only on the way towards articulate speech.

When Philip had finished his story,

he begged of his companion to consider whether she could be instrumental in getting some fancy-work, such as gentlewomen in poor circumstances affect, for Mrs. Seaford and her daughter.

‘I will gladly do whatever I can, Philip,’ said Violet; ‘I will make out to-night a list of all the things I could possibly find use for—’

‘My dear child,’ remonstrated Philip, ‘you yourself surely don’t want as many lace handkerchiefs and things of that sort as will employ two persons. What I want you to do is to go to the people with whom you deal for these things, and ask them to give work to Mrs. Seaford. It will, at the least, be an occupation for them; and I suppose Captain Seaford’s life was insured for a good sum, which will help them considerably.’

Miss Kingscote had barely time to promise her coöperation in this charitable work when the mysterious and sudden movement took place with which ladies manage to rise all at once from the dinner-table. As they

were going out, Philip noticed that Mary Thormanby wore a delicate little necklet, of Venetian workmanship, which he had brought her from Paris the summer before, and presented to her on one quiet afternoon, when she was particularly good and grateful.

He sat down at the table again, moody and silent; Lord Cecil Sidmouth came round to him, bringing his glass in his hand.

‘I say, old man, what’s the matter with you? I hear there is to be a jolly row about that paper of Mercier’s; a man at the Reform last night was saying that Lord Campbell’s Act should be made to apply to the Analytical discussions. And after all, it is such humbug to say that the law should hold the crime to be as criminal in a man as in a woman; when common sense, and all the natural relations of the sexes, show you it is nothing of the kind. But I tell you what should be done. I would punish a man who inveigled a married woman into running away with him

by making him marry her. If she is such a woman as would run away with him, what better punishment could you invent? With such a law in operation, you would never hear of another case.'

Lord Cecil's project did not receive even the compliment of a criticism. Philip asked him whether he would not go into the drawing-room at once, instead of sitting and idling over wine; and into the drawing-room, a short time thereafter, they accordingly went.

Before we follow them, a word may be said about a brief conversation which took place between Mr. Drem and Sir James Kingscote. The former, as usual, had drunk a good deal of wine, and his face was even redder than it ordinarily was. He had got Sir James to withdraw a short distance from the table, and was engaged in filling up the intervals of his sipping brown sherry with some eager commercial talk.

The tall frosty-whiskered baronet was not a very rich man. His family was an

old one (Sir James was accustomed to say in his proud way that the only Kingscote who had done an action unworthy of the name was his ancestor who had condescended to accept the baronetcy in 1660), and had at one time been wealthy enough. Perhaps Charles II. fancied the baronetcy a sufficient return for all the property that old Roden Kingscote had lost in the service of royalty; but, at all events, the second baronet found himself the heir to a very crippled estate, and his five successors had not been able to improve the condition of affairs since then. Sir James, the present baronet, had been driven into railways, and now saw the company on which he had chiefly depended on the brink of bankruptcy, with their shares rapidly sinking from day to day. It was on the subject of these shares that Mr. Drem was now advising him in a fine oracular fashion. Success had given Mr. Drem the right to be familiar with the baronet, who was an unlucky poor devil, quite incapable of amassing a fortune. With conscious supe-

riority, Richard Drem smiled in a calm patronising way, and pointed out to his companion that there was no help for him.

‘Told you so long ago, Sir James. You would have been a richer man by several thousand pounds to-day if you had sold out when I told you. Bless you, these things can only be managed by the initiated. You amateurs come in and think you can be precious clever. It’s no use; you have no experience. You only lose your money. It wants determination, pluck, brains—brains, I say—to succeed in business. I suppose you’d sit a horse or shoot a partridge better than I could, because you’ve had lots of practice; but you should remember that you have had no practice when you come to dealing in shares and competing with men who have lived all their life by it.’

‘I am afraid what you say is very true, Mr. Drem,’ said Sir James coldly, and staring absently at the same time at the tablecloth before him. ‘But I had very good advice when I bought these shares.’

‘Well, never mind, Sir James, you can’t help it. Better men than you have made mistakes ; and, after all, it’s only a few thousands. Bless you, I don’t mind saying, that if you could persuade my son to marry your daughter, I’d buy every share you have in that company at a hundred pounds a piece ! There !’

For an instant the face of the tall gray-haired man flushed angrily ; but presently he laughed.

‘It is an odd sort of joke, Mr. Drem ; but I suppose you think the best thing I can do, now that the shares are getting bad, is to become the father that you see in the theatre-pieces, and sell my daughter. Poor little Vi would be quite complimented if she knew the price you bid for her.’

There was really no sarcasm in his tone, for he had instantly dismissed as too absurd the idea of Mr. Drem’s being in earnest.

‘There’s many a jest that comes true,’ remarked Mr. Drem, with a slow and vi-

nous wink. 'People have been too hasty in fancying that Philip was going to marry that girl Thormanby. There are other signs in the air—'

'I think you may trust to your son selecting a good wife, whoever he chooses,' remarked Sir James somewhat sharply. 'He is a young man of more than ordinary ability; blunt a little in his manner, and all the better for it, for it shows he is honest and trustworthy. His impulsiveness may be carrying him too far in these political notions of his—'

'Ah, yes, isn't it a pity?' sighed Richard Drem. 'He has no more regard for his position and opportunities than if he were a tradesman or a clerk without a farthing to bless himself with. And I have done my best to make him a gentleman, heaven knows. He has had everything in the way of education you could think of, no expense spared; and now he turns round and declares himself a Radical, just as if he were the son of a cab-proprietor! Don't you see, Sir James, that if he was marrying

into a good respectable family, he would have to give up these low and vulgar people he takes an interest in? And the honour of an alliance with your family—'

'We need not speak about that at present, Mr. Drem,' interrupted Sir James with some severity. 'Your joke was only a joke, I know; and Philip will probably select a very good wife for himself without our interference.'

'But I have a right to interfere!' exclaimed Mr. Drem hotly. 'I say I have a right to interfere! It is on my money he must live when he marries—my money—mine!'

'Then God help him!' muttered Sir James to himself, as he discreetly turned the conversation in some other direction.

Meanwhile Philip, full of thoughts of the afternoon on which he had given Mary Thormanby the tiny necklet, went into the drawing-room. An elderly little married woman was singing; and, of course, she sang a song of blighted hopes, and nightingales, and withered roses, finishing up

with an affirmation on the part of the lover that, after all the ills and sorrows of life were over, he would meet his sweetheart in heaven and make it all right there. It did occur to Lord Cecil—and he mentioned the matter to Violet—that the heroine of the song was probably a coquette, that there were probably half-a-dozen disappointed lovers in the position of the gentleman who expected to meet her in heaven, and that if they all met her there, there might be as much disturbance and jealousy and wretchedness as had occurred down here.

‘My dear Cecil,’ said Violet, ‘your sarcasm is very clever, but it is quite lost upon me. You might as well be sewing diligently with a threadless needle. For I know all you boys, after laughing at what you call sentiment, are sure to rush madly into love.’

‘My dear Violet,’ said the red-haired young lord, scowling through his eye-glass. ‘I will not be called a boy. I have written a book; I once nearly proposed to an actress; I have shot a bear; I have designs

upon a seat in Parliament ; and I will not be called a boy.'

But Philip sat apart and alone, and stared into the fire, and communed with himself in this wise :

'What if, after all, it be true that a man only loves once? What if I am wilfully throwing away my solitary chance in life, and earning for myself that perpetual regret that haunts so many people? Scarcely a man one meets who does not say he wishes he had married the girl he first loved, even although she was not very pretty, nor very rich, nor very well educated. He invariably fancies he loved her better than any of her successors ; and he treasures some bit of ribbon, and speaks kindly of certain places that have tender memories for him. Are all these people labouring under a delusion? Is this my only chance, and must I cling to it, at whatever cost?'

There is, unfortunately, no kindly Zadkiel to pierce the future for any man or maiden who is thus perplexed ; and all Philip's endeavours to guess at what might

happen to him thereafter were vain. He could not tell what was the value of the love that he was so sorely tempted to cast away; he did not even know that the doubt was conclusive evidence that it ought to be cast away. He had no data for comparison. Perhaps it was true that he might never love any woman even with the imperfect love that he bestowed on this one. Perhaps it was better to seize the present hour, with such gladness as it might bring, and let the future shift for itself. Above all, might not this imperfect love, in happier times, grow fuller and more beautiful, as he and she got to know each other better?

At that moment he wanted to see what should happen to him in the next half-dozen years. Had he known what would happen to him within the next six months—had he known that after the full and perfect love which he longed for had fallen towards him, there would remain only a shadow of blackness and despair—he need not have troubled so much about his con-

duet towards Mary Thormanby on that particular evening.

As it was he went over to where she sat, the first moment that he saw she was alone, and said,

‘This estrangement is a very stupid thing, Mary.’

‘It was none of my making,’ she replied; but there was relenting in her tone.

‘Don’t be stupid. Why did you put on that necklet to-night?’

‘Because I wished to make you sorry. Have I succeeded?’

And all at once the pale face was lit up with that nameless grace and fascination that she could so easily express, and she bestowed on him one look of frank reconciliation and forgiveness. Even at this moment, as he surrendered himself once more to his thralldom, it was with a sort of inward sigh. He was again friends with the woman he loved; and yet he was not too overjoyed. For there is nothing in love-affairs surer than this—that, when a man has once mistrusted a woman and

wished to break the bonds that bind them together, the doubt returns with a fatal facility. The pitcher may go to the well many times uninjured, but in the end it is broken.

CHAPTER VI.

ROUND AND ABOUT HAMPSTEAD.

MR. PHILIP played the part of special providence towards Mrs. Seaford and her daughter with an audacity that knocked the breath out of any possible remonstrance. In his imperious fashion, he had always been accustomed to meddle with the movements of the Hampstead household, until even the irascible Jims had got into a habit of letting him have his way; and now the Seafords, mother and daughter, fell into submission also. He became their physician, ordering them out of doors on the fine forenoons; he became their employer, contracting for mysterious fancy-work to be supplied to a number of problematic ladies whose names his ingenuity invented on the spot; and he became their

lawyer and banker, taking the management of a sum of 500*l.* which fell to the widow on a policy of life-insurance effected by her husband—about the only instance of prudence and foresight which poor Tom Seaford had ever exhibited.

Now, persons who have fallen heir to some such insurance-money, gift, or bequest, know that in most cases the original sum gets considerably curtailed on various pretences before it reaches the hand of the legatee. But Mr. Philip easily persuaded Mrs. Seaford to go with him to his father's lawyer; and this gentleman, singular to relate, was so honourable and praiseworthy a person that the 500*l.* eventually reached her quite intact.

'A man in his position,' remarked Mr. Philip — telling a lie with the most unblushing confidence — 'can't be expected to care about little trifling commissions. When he takes such an affair in hand, it is merely as a sort of compliment, you know, to people who have larger dealings with him.'

‘It is very kind of you, Mr. Drem,’ said Mrs. Seaford.

‘Of him, you mean, Mrs. Seaford,’ replied Philip, in a matter-of-fact way. ‘But, you know, he has all my father’s business.’

These diverse duties called Mr. Philip to Hampstead very frequently indeed. Why neither he nor any of the small household saw anything imprudent in these constant visits—why no one of them fancied for a moment that it was possible some measure of affection might arise between the two young people thus thrown together—or, worse still, that the vague misery of love might smite the one down, leaving the other untouched—it may be difficult to explain here. But up at Hampstead there was no difficulty or trouble in the matter. They all knew that Philip was as good as engaged to a lady in his own sphere of life. He made no secret of his affection for her; and would tell in the frankest fashion his reasons for going away suddenly of an afternoon.

It was the obvious relations existing

between Philip and Lilian Seaford, however, that set the matter at rest, and blinded them to any possible danger lying ahead. He treated her as if she were merely a child. There was between them none of the formality and cautious self-defence with which young people who *might* marry arm themselves. Philip spoke bluntly to her. He pointed out her mistakes in French with the judicial accuracy of a schoolmaster: he criticised her dress, and reprimanded her when he thought it was too tight at the waist. He told her what books she ought to read, and which of them she ought to admire. In short, he thrust his opinions upon her in the tyrannical fashion he used to everybody around him; and the young girl submitted very meekly.

But all this time, when he was really exercising the functions of a parent to her, he was studying her with the deepest interest. Never before had he seen revealed to him so clearly and openly the workings of a pure and childlike nature, which had

nevertheless peculiarities much more decided than mere innocence. The perfect frankness and confidence that reigned between them — unbroken and unshadowed by any thought of change in their present relations — helped him, of course, in this close observation, until he came to know her almost as he knew his own soul. He could read in her eyes, which she turned fearlessly towards him, the current of her every thought; and he began almost to reverence, as a revelation, the sight of this beautiful mental attitude of hers, which was full of wonder and delight over the world. All things were new to her; she looked at the blue of the sky or the glamour of the sunlight as though she had never seen either before. The joy that life gave her was mirrored, from moment to moment, in her face; and the passage of time only provoked a shifting of lights, without shadows. There was a divine optimism, too, in her notions of the men and women around her, which was very curious, and perhaps a trifle sad. She saw

the world as it might have been; and she did not know how different it was from her dream. Philip never forgot having seen this beautiful bird-like nature, that seemed to have dropped down from heaven into the mire and smoke of the City, confronted by the brutal loungee in Trinity-square; he never forgot the confused, frightened stare, the wonder of surprise with which she seemed to meet, but not to understand, the rude repulse given to her gentle interference.

The most unaccountable thing, however, in the girl's character was the presence of a sense of duty so strongly marked as to be almost a sort of fetish. There were many women, he knew, who delighted to worship this idol of their own creation—which sometimes exacts the most unnecessary and cruel sacrifices; but how had this gentle creature, not educated in puritanical circles, and not soured by hardship, come to construct for herself this rigid and inflexible code? Her mother, down in that quiet Devonshire home, had

probably given her very exalted notions of self-denial and other social and kindly virtues; but how had the girl come to consider it a matter of necessity that, supposing she had promised to visit some sick old woman at a certain hour, she would keep her promise to the letter in spite of any inclemency of weather?

‘Some day, you know,’ Philip once said to her, laughing, ‘you will bring a terrible misfortune on yourself and your friends by these exaggerated notions of duty that you have.’

‘It cannot be a misfortune to do what is right,’ she said simply.

‘You may overdo what is right, and make yourself a martyr without any cause,’ he said. But she remained unconvinced.

Very strange, also, to Philip were those unconscious trances of hers, in which she seemed to lose all knowledge of the people and things around her. It was not only in the house that these fits of reverie took place, for sometimes out of doors she would be found by her companions to have stolen

away, without word or sign, into some other world. There was no trace of melancholy on her face then; no regret or shadow of sadness. The reverie was a quite happy one; and though she recalled herself with a start and a look of wonder, there was a strange pleasure in her eyes, as though she had been holding happy converse with unseen beings.

‘We have abolished the devil, and we are becoming impertinent to the angels,’ Philip used to say to himself. ‘And yet who are they with whom she has been talking?’

No one, of course, but a young man would be guilty of the pretty conceit of arguing the existence of angels because a young girl in her absent moods must be talking with somebody; yet Philip was puzzled by these strange trances, and knew that, while all the beautiful workings of her mind lay bare and open to him, there was one direction in which she escaped him. Beyond that bar he could not go; and when he was on the point of saying

that no human being ever knew another human being so closely and well as he knew her, lo! she had vanished and fled out of his sight into the blue, and he wondered that he did not hear the sound of invisible wings.

On the morning on which Mr. Philip went up to see about the final disposal of the 500*l.*, he found Lilian and Mrs. Lawson about to go out for a walk together over the Heath.

‘I must go with you, to take care of you,’ said he; ‘and we will talk over business-matters when we get back.’

So he turned away from the door with them. It was a pleasant mild morning in early March, with plenty of bright sunlight, and a strong breeze blowing fresh and grateful from the south. James Lawson’s cottage lay down at the east end of the Heath, so that his Sunday rest was not broken in upon by the revellers who frequented the higher portions of the common. Indeed, it was only from the top windows of the cottage that you could

catch a glimpse of Highgate; and, when you left the house, you had to climb up the East Heath-road before you had anything like a view.

As they went up this road, the horizon gradually widened, until they could see, far up in the north, the white houses and the gray church-spire shining in the sun. The strong south wind had swept along all the smoke of the City until it lay in a great bronze-coloured cloud behind the gleaming houses of Highgate, while over their head the sky was of a keen blue, and the warm spring light fell on the green slopes of the common, and the unsightly red gashes of the brick-fields down in the hollow. You should have seen how the brisk breeze had brought a tingling colour into the young girl's cheeks, and how the sunlight played hide-and-seek among her rich brown hair, throwing clear shadows across the warm colour of her face, or down on the perfect whiteness of her neck.

Yet what was there to mention about this commonplace stroll, on an ordinarily

bright forenoon, through scenes which were sufficiently familiar to all of them? Years afterward we may look back upon some such insignificant morning, and find its every incident transfigured and made memorable by tender or tragic association. The lover walks with his mistress, and he does not see how fair the country is for looking at her eyes. But when she has gone away, and he returns to the old place where they used to walk together, he finds the landscape imbued with the mournful recollections of these happy times, and it is very beautiful as well as sad to him. Then he paid no attention to the tree under which they sat, to the stile at which they parted; but now both are sacred to him, and his eyes are full of tears as he looks at them. Perhaps he goes down to the brook where they used to wander in the evenings: there are forget-me-nots growing there, but they grow for others now.

And if these three unconscious creatures who cheerfully wandered up the East

Heath-road, and passed Well-walk, thinking of the brightness of the morning, if they thought of anything, had known with what terrible associations these commonplace localities were hereafter to be invested by them, they would not have passed them so carelessly. As it was, there was but little to attract their notice. Highgate was beautiful enough up in the silvery north, but Well-walk, and the eastern end of the Heath, and the 'Vale of Health,' were not much to look at. As they strolled on, the two younger people listened with delight to a number of old-fashioned stories of her youth, which were told them by Mrs. Lawson, who had all the keen sense of humour which her husband lacked. Sometimes it was difficult enough for them to follow her broad Scotch; but then they were 'aired' on to her meaning by the wonderful play of expression across the old woman's face. For herself, she enjoyed these reminiscences heartily, and she was possessed of the excellent memory which frequently accompanies sharp observation

and a happy notion of fun. Her stories of the adventures of her childhood, of the absurdities and superstitions of the neighbours, of the incidents in her own family, were thoroughly dramatic. All the oddities of situation were minutely described, until one could see that she was picturing to herself the whole scene as it actually occurred.

As they descended into the vale, Lilian turned to admire the pretty lake, and grotto-work, and shrubbery, down in the hollow. There was no human being about the place on this morning, no trace of the flashy dissipation which at certain seasons invades Hampstead-heath; and, in the clear light and the silence, these poor tavern-decorations seemed quite pretty and pleasant to look at. Then they crossed over and ascended the other side of the little valley.

‘Don’t you think,’ said Lilian, looking up to where the line of the road ran along the blue sky, ‘that when we reach the top, we must find the sea on the other side?’

It was natural enough to think that the strong light and the strong breeze should be coming over to them from a great windy plain of sea: but when they got up to the road, it was a very different prospect which met their eyes. The long stretch of western country lay under the bright spring sunshine, the faint lines of hedge and road fading into a thin blue mist that hovered along the hills by the horizon. Down in the south the houses of Hendon shone whitely among the thick trees; up in the north lay the scattered cottages of Finchley, with the pale stones of the cemetery glittering in the light; and on the far spaces between and beyond lay clumps of wood, and tiny glints of water, with here and there a farmstead rich in yellow stacks and red tiles. All around them, too, were the dark-green patches of furze of the Heath itself, scattered among the rough sand-pits; over there stood a cluster of fir-trees, of a still blacker green; and everywhere were the tall leafless elms rising into the blue sky, with the sunlight shining on

their green trunks and black branches. All this spring landscape, cold and clear and bright, was full of anticipation and promise—full of the tingling of coming life; but as yet there was scarcely a bud or a leaf visible. Some of the fields were green and shining (with the glossy rooks watching you warily as you passed), and here and there you saw a tree that was just tipped with buds; but the mild south-wind blew as yet over ragged ploughed fields and miry fallow, and the sunlight shone on branches that were hard and black.

‘The first wild-flowers I have seen this year!’ cried Lilian, making a sudden rush downward into a sand-pit, and halting by the side of a large patch of furze, which was covered with half-opened yellow buds. She tried to pick a piece, but the jagged spears of the gorse were too strong for her slight fingers; and so she turned away with a petulant gesture of disappointment. Of course Philip was down at her side in a moment, engaged in damaging his hands severely and unnecessarily in trying to

secure the largest piece of bloom. That trophy having been duly presented, they were about to climb up again to where Mrs. Lawson stood, when Lilian turned and confronted him.

‘Do you know when furze is out of bloom?’ she asked merrily, with a bright laugh on her face.

‘No,’ said Philip.

‘Why, “when kissing’s out of fashion.” Don’t you know the old proverb?’

He looked at her with a tantalised admiration and chagrin as she stood and waited for his answer, with some surprise on her face that he said nothing. Why was it that she *would* talk to him in that fearlessly frank way, as if he were merely Mrs. Lawson, or some other old woman? She ought to have been frightened to speak about kissing to him; she was not in the least. And if kissing did not occur to her, it could not well escape occurring to him; for as she stood before him, with the breezy sunlight shining in her blue eyes—shining on her parted lips and pearly teeth, on her

bright happy face, and on the wonder of her brown hair—he would have been less than man had not some vague, wild, audacious notion flashed across his brain.

‘Come,’ she said, ‘must I help you up the bank?’

She climbed up a few feet of the steep side of the place and stretched out her hand.

‘Can you pull me up?’ he said, catching hold of her fingers.

‘Yes; hold tight!’

With which she gave a hearty tug. On level ground he would probably have been pulled forward on his face: but on this incline the result was very different. Instead of moving him, she only over-balanced herself—slipped with one foot—made a despairing effort to steady herself by his hand, gave a slight cry, and knew she was falling. What immediately followed is not very clear; but she presently became aware that he was holding her, and that, but for him, she would have gone ignominiously into the furze-bush. The next second she

had released herself, and was standing before him in shame and confusion, with a prodigious blush over her face.

‘I was very stupid,’ she said, looking to the ground; ‘let us go up some other way.’

‘Now let me try to pull you up,’ he said. ‘You will see I have firmer footing.’

‘No,’ she said almost coldly; ‘we can walk along until the bank is less steep.’

This method of escape took them in the direction of Spaniard’s Tap; and when they rejoined Mrs. Lawson they continued in the same direction—passing that semi-rural public-house and following the Highgate road. Lilian was very quiet—not to say reserved. She had a vague impression of having been guiltily thoughtless and indiscreet in her conduct; for, after all, what right had she to treat Mr. Drem as if he were a mere boy, as fond of careless amusement as herself? And so she sidled in by Mrs. Lawson, and paid the tenderest court and homage to that old lady, and was even demonstratively affectionate. The shrewd

old Scotchwoman perceived the alteration in the girl's manner, but was rather puzzled to divine the cause. Standing on the edge of the road, she had seen the whole adventure of the sand-pit, and heard every word the two young people had uttered. What was there in either to alter their relations with each other?

That these were altered seemed sufficiently clear. Lilian never by any chance addressed a remark to Mr. Philip, but kept on the other side of Mrs. Lawson, and was assiduously attentive to her aged friend. Mr. Philip was being clearly shut out in the cold, despite all his good-humoured efforts to engage both of his companions in conversation. Mrs. Lawson, who could not understand what it all meant, found herself being paid great attention to by both the young people; and yet they never spoke a word to each other. When Philip 'talked at' Lilian to Mrs. Lawson, by speaking of something in which the young girl was known to be interested, Lilian said nothing at all, or else spoke to Mrs. Law-

son about something quite different. What *did* it all mean?

Nor was Mrs. Lawson, shrewd and observant as she was, less puzzled on their homeward walk; nor was she any nearer a solution at the end of the afternoon. Under a variety of pretexts Philip managed to stay the whole day up at Hampstead; and during the entire time Mrs. Lawson, who was curious and watchful, saw him continually making efforts to become friendly and confidential as of yore with Lilian. These efforts were met by nothing in the shape of a rude repulse, but were dexterously avoided in a way which showed that Lilian had more of the woman in her than had been suspected. And while the fair young Devonshire girl seemed to draw back from Philip's friendly and good-natured advances, she showed herself unusually affectionate towards all the others. She brought Jim his slippers and ministered to his small comforts. She showed the like anxiety about the trifling wants of her mother. Towards Mrs. Lawson she behaved with all

the duteous regard and respect of a daughter ; and when Alec came home, she set to work to spoil the boy with kindness. Philip alone was shut out from her gracious condescension ; and, when he left the house and made his way down to Park-lane, if he was not so much puzzled as Mrs. Lawson, he was a good deal more vexed and disappointed.

Meanwhile Mrs. Lawson's curiosity had not gone down with the setting sun. She watched the girl very attentively during the remainder of the evening ; and when the former retired she accompanied her and went with her into her room. She had some pretence or other as an excuse ; and, as she was apparently about to leave, she said,

‘ By the bye, Lilian, what was the matter between you and Mr. Philip, that ye wouldna' speak a word to him a' the afternoon ?’

‘ Didn't I, Mrs. Lawson ?’ said the girl, looking to the ground.

‘ Come, Lilian,’ said the old woman,

going forward to her in her kindly way and putting her hand on her shoulder, 'if ye have quarrelled wi' Mr. Philip, ye shouldna' be hard on him; for he doesna' know how to be kind enough to you and your mother.'

'O, it isn't that,' said the girl eagerly. 'We haven't quarrelled at all—not at all—only—'

And with that the beautiful blue eyes were upturned to the old woman's face, with a look of piteous trouble in them; as if, for the first time in her life, the veil of concealment were drawn over their wonted frankness, and as if she knew not how to bear this barrier between herself and those near her.

'I will tell you all about it, Mrs. Lawson,' she said suddenly, and glancing to the door, as if she feared some one might overhear. 'I have been so thoughtless until to-day; and it was only to-day that it occurred to me I had no right to go on talking and playing with Mr. Drem just as if he were one of us—being impudent to him,

and careless, and expecting him to be friends with me. I never thought of it until to-day; for you know he has been coming here so often, and has made himself like one of the family almost, and we have all been talking to him as if he were—as if he were—you know what I mean, don't you? He himself does not reflect—he is too happy and careless—and I don't know how it is, Mrs. Lawson, that it has all at once seemed not quite right to me; and indeed I wish—I wish—O, Mrs. Lawson, I wish he would never come here again!

With that the young girl suddenly burst into tears, and flung herself on her old friend's bosom, and hid her burning face there.

'My puir lassie,' said Mrs. Lawson, who was startled beyond expression by a suspicion she dared not name, 'why should ye blame yoursel' for our fault, if it is a fault? And maybe it was a greater fault o' thochtlessness than ony o' us dreamed o' to hae him comin' here; but that onything should

come o't never crossed our minds. Dinna be feart, my lassie; Mr. Philip is ower sensible to mistake the friendliness he meets wi' here.'

The girl raised her head; and there was a strange excited look in her eyes, that were still full of tears.

'You do not think *he* would notice anything different in my manner?' she said eagerly, almost wildly. 'I would not for worlds he should fancy I had been thinking over it—or any of them—or any of them, Mrs. Lawson! I only wish to be away from him. I was frightened, that was all; and I am not crying because I care about it, but because—because I am frightened — and — and — very miserable. You see it is only a trifle, Mrs. Lawson; and so you won't tell mamma, will you? for it would only trouble her about what is—what is only a trifle, you know!'

The tears were running down her cheeks, and she held up her hands in a pitiful pleading way, that was full of a childlike entreaty.

‘But you have told me naething I could tell her, my lassie,’ said the old Scotch-woman, gathering her to her and putting her fond motherly arms round the slight sobbing figure. ‘I’m no sure that I ken mysel’ why ye dinna want to hae Mr. Philip come back here; but it’s an easy thing to bid him bide awa’. Sae gude-nicht, my bairn, and dinna ye fash yoursel’ about naething.’

‘Indeed,’ said Mrs. Lawson to herself as she went downstairs, ‘I’m thinkin’ we hae a’ been indiscreet in this matter; and it’s the youngest o’ us—a mere lassie—who has found it out first. I hope it’s no ower late, and that Mr. Philip will bide awa’ when we tell him. I’m no so sure that he will; for the Lord kens what an obstinacious deevil he is!’

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOURNING-DRESS.

No sooner had Mr. Philip returned home from his visit to Hampstead than he was summoned into his father's presence. Richard Drem had just finished dinner, and was sitting alone at the head of the spacious table, which was covered with fruit, flowers, and wine. The great merchant never allowed his wife to insult his dignity by descending to any homeliness of fare or abandonment of ceremony, merely because they had no guests. Even when, as on this occasion, there was no one to dinner but husband and wife, Mr. Drem put on his dress-coat, his stiff white tie, and white waistcoat; he expected his wife to appear in her most resplendent evening-costume; the dinner was formally announced in the

drawing-room; he solemnly conducted his wife downstairs; and they sat at each end of the large table—far enough away from each other to give Mr. Drem every opportunity of swearing at the servants.

‘I ask no one to my house who is better than myself,’ he used to say with an oath; ‘and if the master of the house shouldn’t have as good a dinner as anybody who comes and gets it for nothing, who should? Damme, don’t I pay for it?’

When they thus dined alone—Philip had no great love for these family dinners, as may be supposed, and had a trick of dining in St. James’s-street—Richard Drem was no such simpleton as to drink his second-class wines himself, and keep the best for his friends. His practice was quite the reverse.

‘Half of ’em don’t know the value of my good wines when I give ’em them,’ he would grumble, ‘and the other half drink them and curl up their nose at me for being such a fool as to waste my money on

a pack of ungrateful toadies and sneaks. O, don't I know! don't I know! If Richard Drem hadn't a farthing to-morrow morning, where would all his friends be? They're just like other beasts; and they'll fawn round you, and lick your hand, and wag their tail only as long as you feed 'em!

The gentleman who had formed this comfortable estimate of his friends and acquaintances now sat and waited the appearance of his son. Philip had gone up to his own room. There was a letter lying on the table for him; he opened it, and read:

‘MY DEAR PHILIP, — Captain Dering wishes to buy the black cob you were riding last week, and will give you seventy guineas. You will let him have it, won't you, to please me?—Ever yours,

‘MARY THORMANBY.’

‘Captain Dering be hanged!’ said Philip, throwing the letter into the grate.

It was Captain Dering he said; but it

is to be feared that it was Mary Thormanby he meant.

Then he went downstairs to the dining-room, and saw at a glance that his father had been drinking plentifully of the special brown sherry which he generally kept for himself.

‘Where have you been, sir?’ said Richard Drem in his most insolent tone.

‘Out,’ replied the younger man, coolly taking up a position on the hearth-rug, turning his back on the fire, and calmly surveying the table before him.

‘How dare you answer me with such impertinence, sir!’ cried the father, with his red face more aflame than ever. ‘I know your goings on. I know where you have been. I know where you have been spending day after day, forgetting your friends, neglecting your duties, spending your money—spending my money, *my* money. I should say—and earning for yourself the character of a—hiccup!—abandoned *roué*!’

The last sentence caused a slight sparkle

in the eyes of the tall self-possessed young man who stood there; that was all.

‘You don’t know what you’re saying,’ he remarked compassionately, filling for himself a glass of claret.

‘Why, sir, I will teach you that I *do* know. I will teach you to go and spend my money in bribing lawyers to look after the affairs of that woman and her child. Ah, you see I do know; I do know how you have been wasting your time of late.’

Philip drank the claret, put down the glass, and walked towards the door.

‘If you have nothing else to say to me, sir,’ he observed in his most respectful tone, ‘I may as well go.’

‘Philip!’ cried the father piteously.

‘Well, sir?’

‘You won’t go and leave your poor old father? If I am angry, isn’t it all for your own good? I only want to see you married, Philip, to a suitable woman. I would give you half my money in a lump to see you well married.’

‘But I don’t see what my looking after

Mrs. Seaford's affairs—a duty which you, and not I, should have undertaken—has to do with my marriage.'

'I thought you had broken off with that girl Thormanby—I was told so,' whined Richard Drem; 'and then, instead of your going to see the Kingscotes—as you would do if you had any sense, and knew the importance of being intimate with people who are of good society; and if you knew what an excellent wife Violet would make—you cast aside all your friends and spend the whole of your time with this woman and her daughter. They are blinding you, Philip, blinding you! *I* know what they mean; *I* know they are trying to inveigle you into marrying her—'

'Into marrying Lilian Seaford?' cried the young man.

'O, I have been told—I have been told; and less likely things have happened.'

'You must be dreaming,' said Philip, and he again turned towards the door.

'Stay, sir,' shouted Richard Drem, with the choleric blood rushing back to his face.

‘I will have you know that I am master in this house, and that I will exact obedience from every one under its roof. You need not pretend to be indifferent; I know your fine-gentleman airs; and I will let you understand that it is I who have to decide whether you shall continue this intimacy or not. Do you know who you are, sir? Do you know that you are a pauper? Do you know that to-morrow morning I could close my doors against you, and turn you out into the streets to make your living?’

The young man shut the door, and walked back to his father’s side, and stood over him.

‘Will you do me the favour,’ he said quite calmly, ‘of remembering what I am going to say to you? Perhaps you had better put it down on paper, that you may be quite sure not to forget to-morrow morning. It is this: you have twice made use of these phrases to me, and threatened to turn me out to earn my own living. *The next time you do it, I will take you at your word.*’

The young man turned and left the room. The colour forsook Richard Drem's face, and he made a sort of gesture as though he would recall his son. It was too late, however; and so he sank back in his chair, apparently suddenly sobered.

Philip went upstairs to the morning-room in which Mrs. Drem was sitting, all alone, doing some fancy-needlework.

'Are you quite by yourself?' he said, as he sauntered in.

'Yes.'

'You ought to get a companion. My father's conversation does not improve as time wears on.'

'Has he been saying anything to you, Philip?'

'Nothing particular or unusual; only a few of the ordinary domestic amenities. By the way, how came Mary Thormanby to write to me on your note-paper?'

'She called here this afternoon — she and Captain Dering.'

'O, they came together?'

'Yes; I fancy they met by accident

outside. What will you do about selling Bavardeur?’

‘I never transact business with women,’ said Mr. Philip quietly. ‘Is Captain Dering afraid of me, that he cannot come near me without catching hold of Miss Thormanby’s apron-string?’

‘It was all a joke, Philip,’ said Mrs. Drem anxiously. ‘They were making fun and talking about the cob, and she said she would intercede with you for him. She expects you to go out riding with her to-morrow forenoon; and you will meet Captain Dering at lunch, and the matter can be settled then.’

‘The pleasure of meeting Captain Dering would be too great,’ replied Philip. ‘One cannot stand a dose of his music-hall liveliness more than once a month.’

‘I fear you are not in a good temper, my dear,’ said Mrs. Drem mildly.

‘I hope I am not in a bad one,’ he said, laughing, ‘for I am come to ask a favour of you.’

‘And that is?’

‘ You remember my speaking to you of Mrs. Seaford and her daughter?’

‘ Yes.’

‘ I want you to come and make their acquaintance.’

‘ My dear!’ exclaimed Mrs. Drem with a start. ‘ Consider what your father would say! I know there is some one who tells him everything that goes on up there: he knows all the particulars of your visits — everything.’

‘ I suppose that is my kindly cousin Arthur who has been getting it out of poor little Alec. But no matter. There is nothing to conceal.’

‘ O, but I dare not, Philip.’

‘ But you will, I know you will. I want you, for one thing, to give Mrs. Seaford’s daughter a dress.’

‘ I will give her the dress willingly,’ said poor Mrs. Drem with eagerness; ‘ but as for seeing her, Philip—’

‘ Will Bluebeard eat your head off?’

‘ You must not talk of your father like that.’

‘I am very sorry: my notions of filial respect have been oddly thwarted. However, I want you to give her a dress that will suit a young girl who has got the most graceful figure you could imagine—something flowing, I mean, and simple, without puffs and gathers and flounces and what not.’

‘I never knew you take such interest in women’s costume before, Philip,’ replied Mrs. Drem with a smile. ‘But I know exactly what you want. Miss Seaford must have the “Princess shape.”’

‘The what?’

‘The “Princess shape,” you know, with the dress apparently in one piece from neck to foot; tight-fitting above, with a long and graceful skirt below. Haven’t you noticed Miss Thormanby’s lavender dress, with the black bands?’

‘No, I don’t think so,’ said Philip dubiously.

‘And yet she fancies it is a special favourite of yours. I don’t believe you men ever see what we women wear unless when

we call your attention to it. However, since she is young, with a pretty figure, and must wear mourning, what do you say to a black rep?’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘A black rep.’

‘It sounds wicked, but I don’t know what it is.’

‘A black rep, with crape bands, would be very pretty.’

‘And so you will see her, and send her the dress as a present?’ he said coaxingly, in the tone he had used to get his first double-barrelled gun.

‘O, Philip, you are asking too much this time,’ said Mrs. Drem in a meekly complaining voice.

‘Then you’ll think over it; and meanwhile I shall go down to the club and have some supper.’

‘You don’t mean to say, Philip,’ she exclaimed, turning and staring at him, ‘that you have had no dinner?’

‘Well, I don’t know that I am to be pitied for not having dined at home. The

charming family intercourse that prevails at our table is just a little trying at times, you know. But that I think it a shame to leave you all alone, I should never dine here by any chance whatever.'

'Don't shay that, Philip,' hiccupped a voice at the door of the room. 'You are breaking the heart of your poor old father—your poor old father.'

'Good-night,' said Philip to his step-mother. 'I daresay I shall not see you when I return.'

He passed his father without saying a word, and went downstairs and out of the house. Jumping into a hansom, he was soon driven down to his club, where (after some brief snatch of supper) he found 'Blue Peter' raging fast and furious. With what success or ill-success he endeavoured to rob his neighbours of their lives (which, for the time being, had oddly enough become valuable) does not concern this present history. Perhaps a temperament like his is not the best suited for billiards.

It was towards one o'clock when he got

home again. As he turned up the gas, and roused the fire in his bedroom, he perceived that Mrs. Drem had left a note for him on the mantelpiece. It merely said :

‘DEAR PHILIP,—I will get the dress for Miss Seaford, if you like, and send a card and my compliments, leaving you to make what sort of explanation you can. But I should prefer, for everybody’s sake, not to visit Mrs. Seaford and her daughter personally.’

‘She is a kindly little woman,’ said Philip to himself, ‘and I fancy she has had rather hard lines of it in this world. I see the dress project must fall through. Perhaps, by the time I have acquired sufficient intimacy to warrant my giving Lilian the dress myself, she may be partly or wholly out of mourning.’

But if there was to be any change in Lilian Seaford’s costume, it was not to be in the way of lessening the depth of her mourning ; for quite suddenly—so sud-

denly, that those concerned were too stunned to look back and inquire for the cause—Lilian's mother took ill and died. She died of an illness that is not yet included in medical systems, and has never been subjected to diagnosis. Yet thousands die of it, and die despite the clear reasoning which shows that, as the disease is neither organic nor functional, it can attack nothing, and consequently can have no effect. The illness of which Mrs. Seaford died was grief; and it killed her quite as thoroughly as if the doctors had recognised it and given it a Latin name. So the small household at Hampstead was again the scene of trouble and desolation; and the young girl, left alone, began to wonder whether it would not be better if she were to go too.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PARABLE.

THERE was once a f**a which went hopping about and at length lit upon a child's toy—a small sheep, with long woollen hair. The f**a thought he was a most fortunate fellow, and said to himself,

‘Ah, now I shall have a hearty meal! Let us descend to dinner.’

So he went along the white wool until he reached the body of the sheep, which was of wood. On making this discovery, his rage was uncontrollable. He puffed and blew; he rolled his eyes; and would have twisted his moustache, if he had had one.

‘What! *you* call yourself an animal, do you? I am ashamed to be in the company of such an impostor; why, you haven't a

drop of blood in the whole of your miserable body !'

Now Major Delaney stood at the window of the drawing-room of his club, and absently tapped his finger-nail on the pane, while he stared blankly out into St. James's-street. Circumstances (and cards) had not been very propitious of late with the Major, and he was so far in the position of the f**a, that he would have liked at that moment to be told where he was going to get his dinner — for a dinner with strangers, acquaintances, or friends generally, somehow or other, added to the Major's finances. In short, he observed an excellent rule in his daily walk and conversation ; for while others lived to dine, he dined to live.

At first sight you would have fancied the Major's face was chiefly a mass of bushy gray hair ; so gray and so bushy were his whiskers, his large moustache, and his eyebrows. His complexion, too, was not red and soldier-like, but seamed and gray ; with a slight determination of colour to the nose. He was rather a small man, but he had a

martial appearance, and his talk was largely seasoned with military oaths, when he was out of ladies' society. Indeed, his conversation had frequently a sanguineous tinge, and in moments of excitement was distinguished by a profusion of L's.

Like most men who have little else to boast of, Major Delaney had a habit of letting you know every few minutes that he was a gentleman. The word 'gentleman' was seldom out of his mouth, and when it did disappear, it was to make way for the word 'cad.' To divide the world into gentlemen and cads, was the Major's mission, he himself being the standard by which he measured all persons and things which were to be considered gentlemanly. 'By Gad, sir, do they think soup like this fit for a gentleman?' he would say; and he even exercised such latitude with his favourite adjective that he would venture to exclaim, 'You won't find, sir, a more gentlemanly-looking little mare in the Park!' He was so severe upon cads, that you were reminded of the proverbial zeal of the apos-

tate; and so ostentatious about his character of gentleman, that you could scarcely help thinking that the assumption had for him the charm of novelty.

The Major was thus pensively drumming on the window-pane, when he was recalled from his reverie by the voice of Mr. Philip, who asked leave to introduce a friend of his, Lord Cecil Sidmouth. The Major had seen the red-haired young gentleman often, but had never been introduced to him; he was now delighted to make his acquaintance.

‘Mr. Drem and you have been bullying the Chancellor of the Exchequer, haven’t you, by Gad!’ exclaimed the Major with a laugh.

Lord Cecil—whose hair seemed redder and drier than ever—fixed his eye-glass, looked indifferently at the Major from head to foot, and said,

‘We formed part of the deputation; yes.’

‘Workmen’s dwellings, or something of that sort. Suppose we shall see your speech

in to-morrow's papers. Tell you what, you young men are going the pace, by Gad—raising up the lower classes, you know, and giving them ideas about—about—'

'Ventilation, for example,' suggested Philip.

'And then,' continued the Major good-humouredly, 'it *was* too bad of you to have ladies at that meeting of your Analytical Society, and talk to them about Malthus—'

'But who ought to be more interested in the question?' observed Lord Cecil quite gravely, and scowling through his eye-glass. 'And, indeed, they might have given us a few valuable hints on the subject, if they hadn't been afraid of the newspapers.'

The Major, not knowing whether these graceless young scamps might not be making fun of him, broke off the conversation by abruptly asking them both to dine with him. Lord Cecil had a dozen excuses; Philip had none; for was not Mary Thormanby certain to be of the party? On the other hand, it was to be considered that

the two friends, having won their point with the Government in the forenoon, had resolved to dine together in celebration of their victory. At length Lord Cecil's scruples were got over; and, having executed a game or two of pyramids, in which the Major was content to play badly, they all, dressed as they were, drove up to ask Mrs. Delaney for some dinner.

Mr. Philip was now going to see the woman whom he loved; and the mission ought to have been a joyful one. It was quite the reverse. His experiences at this time were of a kind which are probably not unfamiliar to many people who have not had the knowledge of life or the courage to break asunder certain bonds. Absence from this woman was more or less painful to him; the thought of being always absent was inexpressibly so. For it represented the voluntary leaving behind of all the beautiful dreams he had once dreamed about her; and even although he had discovered that she was not quite the creature whom his idealising fancy had created,

there still hung over and around her this atmosphere of tender romance. Many and many a time he reasoned himself into determining never to give her up. It was only boys, he said to himself, who imagined that a woman ought to be perfect. Women were not perfect; and perhaps this one, if her imperfections in certain directions were sufficiently obvious, was altogether as good a woman as he might ever meet. Besides, what right had a man to insist that his wife should be perfect, knowing as he did his own failings? If he could have taken the matter down to the Analytical Society for discussion—and if the philosophers of the society would have agreed to accept without proof such premisses as that Mary Thormanby was a woman, and that marriage-laws existed in England—they would doubtless have resolved that, all things being considered, Philip Drem ought to marry Major Delaney's niece.

But after having reasoned himself into this decision, and after having experienced all the pangs of absence, he was far from

joyful in going to see her. He knew his visit would be full of dissatisfaction, and would end in dissatisfaction. Instead of spending a pleasant evening together, he knew she would be playing some more or less palpable character either to charm or to annoy him; that their conversation would consist of various covert epigrams and retorts (wholly lost on the Major and his wife); and that he would leave the house wishing there was not a woman in the world. Her presence had on him the effect which strong drinks have on some men: they cannot resist the craving, but they dislike the drink as they actually drink it, and they are ashamed of themselves for yielding to the temptation.

It was a peculiar state of affairs for two lovers to be in.

On this particular evening Mary Thormanby was in unusually good spirits, which she betrayed only in the eloquent look of her gray eyes, and in the keen quick sarcasm of her tongue. The courteous and cutting by-play, however, which was car-

ried on between her and Philip, was rather a puzzle to her aunt and uncle, and was no less bewildering to the young lord, who sometimes scowled at her over the table, and wondered how this smooth-speaking, cold-looking woman could have captured his friend.

‘I can understand your calling Violet Kingscote a clever woman, if you like,’ he used to say to Philip. ‘That is what I call a smart sort of girl in talking; but there’s always common-sense in what she says. Plenty of fun, if you want it, but sensible hearty sort of fun, and none of your sly underhand ways in it—none of your smooth faces and your adder’s tongues. And what I like about Violet, too, is the uncommonly correct notion she has of what’s going on round about her. She won’t be put upon by anybody; and she’s as good a judge of a dinner as any woman I know. I hate a woman who is always pretending to be an angel, and above her dinner; and I hate worse a woman who is a sort of half Minerva and half china-doll, who thinks her-

self too precious clever to talk like other people.'

It was clear to Philip that Lord Cecil did not much like Mary Thormanby; and on the evening in question the president of the Analytical was inclined to put down the pale-faced fascinating woman opposite him, who talked so brilliantly and showed her white teeth. But the Analytical Society *en masse* would have been no match for the dextrous wit and ingenuity of Mary Thormanby; and as the Dr. Johnson process of crushing people is not permitted in modern society, Lord Cecil was fain to visit Miss Thormanby only with an occasional scowl, and to bestow his brief and laconic remarks upon the charmed and voluble Mrs. Delaney.

The accidental mention of Captain Der-
ing's name put the younger lady into a position of defensive sarcasm,—just as a cat that has eaten a canary will pretend to have done nothing, will rub itself against your leg, and be very friendly, until it sees you lay hold of a whip or a saloon-pistol,

and then it suddenly changes its manner and prepares to fly at you. It was Mrs. Delaney who brought up the unlucky subject, by mentioning to Lord Cecil how much she was surprised that Dr. Dering, Captain Dering's brother, when his child was unwell, instead of attending him himself, called in another doctor.

‘Nothing more natural,’ said Philip curtly. ‘He might try his skill on other people's children, but he wasn't such a fool as to do that with his own. The one strong point about the Derings is, the knowledge they have of their own stupidity.’

‘What a comfort it is the poor people have one redeeming virtue!’ said Miss Thormanby with a charming smile, which was as cold as steel. ‘By the way, did you let Captain Dering have the cob?’

[*Barometer tending to stormy.*]

‘Well, no,’ said Philip; ‘I thought you had constituted yourself the agent for the sale, and I waited to see what you would bid.’

‘You did not thank me for putting

you in the way of a good thing,' she said, in a tone which was very nearly an insult.

'Didn't I?' he said carelessly; 'I am very sorry. People who meddle with horses invariably forget their manners.'

While this pretty sparring was going on, Mrs. Delaney sat ill at ease. She could not understand why her niece was so forgetful of her future as to keep constantly provoking her rich lover; and many a despairing admonition she gave her to be a little more mindful. Woman of the world as she was, however, Mary Thormanby was certainly not mercenary—indeed, she had too much spirit to be mercenary. No one understood better than herself the advantages of money—for she had been early taught the disadvantages of the want of it; but when she would be prudent and coax this favoured lover of hers, the malicious joy of this intellectual strife was too much for her. Her brain took command of her instinct; and made her fight with her best chance of future position. This was heart-

rending to the ambitious Mrs. Delaney, who knew more intimately than most women what straits genteel poverty entailed, and how hard it was to 'make an appearance.'

'Now,' said the Major, when dinner was over, and the ladies had gone to the drawing-room, 'we are not heavy drinkers, are we? The days of the three-bottle men are over—'

'But the results of the three-bottle practice are not,' said Lord Cecil severely. 'I suppose we are all suffering now from the over-drinking of the last generation.'

'Sure, I don't know,' said the Major cheerfully. 'I think we suffer enough from our own over-drinking. But, as I was saying, we are not heavy drinkers; and what do you say to joining the ladies at once, and having a quiet rubber? Threepenny-points, Mr. Drem, eh?'

With which he facetiously winked at Mr. Philip.

'That will just suit me,' said Lord Cecil gravely; 'I never play over threepenny-points.'

‘Of course not,’ said the Major humorously.

‘O, I’m not joking,’ said Lord Cecil (like the newspaper-gentleman, who suddenly says, ‘To be serious,’ as if some effort were required); ‘haven’t you heard the story, Major Delaney? It was abroad at several of the clubs yesterday; I thought it was everywhere by this time. Haven’t you heard of the legacy left me by Lord Carlsmere?’

‘I have not,’ said the Major.

‘Nor I,’ said Philip.

‘By all means let me make myself a hero for a few seconds; perhaps I shall never have a chance again,’ observed his lordship, screwing in his eye-glass. ‘Some months ago Lord Carlsmere, who was my godfather, was staying with us. He got hold of a book of mine, and ran against a memorandum I had written in pencil on the margin. I cannot recollect the words; but they were some schoolboy effort at being profound on the subject of religion. So thought Lord Carlsmere, as least. He

challenged me about the authorship; I acknowledged it. He went home—and *altered his will.*'

The president of the Analytical Society threw out his hands in the fashion of a French *ingénue*—as much as to say, 'There went my 30,000*l.*'

'He died, as you know, a few days ago,' continued Lord Cecil, 'and in his will he leaves me property to the amount of 30,000*l.*, on condition that I become a member of the Church of England.'

'And are you not?' observed the Major, aghast, and instinctively sitting back on his chair. He could make his living by cards; but he was no heretic.

'Well, I suppose I shall be some day,' continued the red-headed young man, 'if I marry and have a lot of children to bring up. I suppose in any case one drifts into the Church of England as offering you as good a solution as any other of a perpetual mystery. But in the mean time, you see, Major Delaney, I am *not* in the Church of England.'

‘And you mean to throw away 30,000*l*.?’ exclaimed the Major, who could scarcely credit his ears.

‘That is my intention,’ remarked Lord Cecil, balancing a walnut on his fore-finger.

‘Of course you will, Cecil,’ said Mr. Philip, ‘but it is remarkably unfortunate, is it not? For you won’t do anybody but yourself any good by the martyrdom.’

As for the Major, he was almost in tears. He begged and prayed, and reasoned with a vehemence which showed the remarkable force of his good-nature; for what interest had he in his lordship getting the money? And it seemed monstrous to him that a young man, who calmly looked forward to joining the Church of England some day, should decline to anticipate that adhesion by a few years merely through an insane scruple of conscience. Nor was it less exasperating that Mr. Philip, instead of joining in his protest, looked upon the matter as inevitable, and really stared with some surprise at his, the Major’s, warm interference.

‘You ought to help me,’ said the Major,

‘to prevent your friend making such an absurd sacrifice.’

‘The sacrifice is absurd and unusual, is it not?’ said Philip, with a laugh which puzzled the Major much. ‘Had it been the other way—had he sacrificed his conscience—there would have been nothing unusual or absurd in it, I daresay.’

‘Suppose we cease discussing the matter,’ said Lord Cecil. ‘I only mentioned it to you, Major Delaney, in case you should want me to play high—’

‘By Gad, sir, I am not a professional gambler,’ remarked the Major with a shrug. ‘Mr. Drem and I have an odd game occasionally—that is all. The stakes are of no consequence—none.’

But he was deeply chagrined and disappointed all the same. Had he thrown away the bait of a dinner all for nothing? What right had this young man to go about with the title of a lord—what right had he to scowl at people, and be ostentatious about his philosophy and his beggarly politics, if he hadn’t a farthing in his pocket? The

fer-a had come to the body of the animal, and there was not a drop of blood to be got. No wonder the Major was disgusted; and that he muttered to his wife, in a corner of the drawing-room,

‘Don’t you ask that Sidmouth here again. The young upstart—he hasn’t a farthing; and as for his manners—all the courtesy he has got is in his title!’

They sat down at the card-table, however; Miss Thormanby and Philip being partners, as usual. As for Lord Cecil, he was glad to get out on the balcony to smoke a cigar, and watch the passing of the people in the lane beneath, or the motion of the stars overhead. If his gaze were directed upward, you may be sure his thoughts were more scientific than sentimental, and were probably connected with his pet theory of evolution.

The story of his lordship’s determination about the legacy was of course brought forward by the Major, who renewed his lamentations, in which he was joined by Mrs. Delaney.

‘Sure he won’t be thanked by anny one for what he’s done ; and take me word for’t, he’ll be vexed enough whin he gets owlder.’

Mrs. Delaney spoke with a much more decided Irish accent than her husband did ; and, indeed, women seem to retain peculiarities of pronunciation much longer than men. This is strange ; for, as Jims used to say to his wife, when she said something particularly Scotch, women ought to speak better than men, having so much more practice.

Mary Thormanby, on the other hand, with her gray eyes waxing almost enthusiastic, said that Lord Cecil had nobly resolved, and that a man capable of doing this was capable of anything.

‘If we in the Church,’ she remarked, with something like a blush of feeling on her face, ‘had the tender conscience, and the resolution, and the bravery, of many people we find out of it, the Church would be different from what it is.’

Philip admired this hearty sympathy, of course, and was glad to see this honest

praise in her eyes ; but then he knew that, half an hour thereafter, she could have added to the Major's wonder and regret some contemptuous expressions of indifference about the whole matter. While he played his hand carelessly, trumping his partner's best card, and forgetting to return her lead, he was all the time imagining a little conversation between her and Captain Dering (for example) about this very subject of the legacy. He could see, instead of the enthusiastic colour and the frank admiration, the smile of derision and pity with which she would dismiss the poor boy's folly. And here came in the problem : suppose she were married to some one who would carefully cultivate the better side of her nature, and give encouragement to those finer sympathies which sprung up, flower-like, among the careless weeds of her mind, might she not be made a very different woman ? And he felt that all the vision of such a possibility he could imagine might at any time be dissipated by one of her cold and scornful smiles.

This was the result, as it had often been before. The brief satisfaction he got from her generous advocacy of Lord Cecil's resolve was speedily destroyed by her expression of sentiments directly contrary in tone—and obviously meant to annoy him. Why should she inevitably subside into this childish trick of provocation—as if she gloried in showing him that she could demean herself in his sight, and yet dare him to go away from her? Why was it impossible for them to speak ten minutes together without finding themselves descending from plain speech into the bandying of meaningless sarcasm? How was it that he could enjoy conversation with any woman except with this one—that she alone was unapproachable?

He rose from the card-table (in spite of his carelessness, he had actually won something) more dissatisfied than ever—longing, indeed, to get out of the house and into the fresh air. The false atmosphere of the place stifled him. No sooner did he enter her society than the frank and honest attitude of his intentions was suddenly altered; and

he had to assume this tiresome position of useless antagonism. The small word-warfare, the underhand sarcasm, the petty trifling—all this was somewhat wearisome. It was an inexpressible relief to get outside—to get a breath of wholesome air, and a look at the great silent space overhead.

But before they left, courtesy demanded that some show of hospitality should be extended to Lord Cecil, who had been amusing himself pretty well with his cigar outside. There was some more helpless conversation about nothing in particular; some feeble suggestion about wine and biscuits; and then a determined desire on the part of the young men to get away.

But just before they left, Lord Cecil and Philip were standing in the middle of the floor; and had been led into talking of some suspicious movement on the part of the Home Secretary.

‘There’s more there than meets the eye,’ remarked Lord Cecil, staring absently before him.

‘There isn’t much,’ observed Mr. Phi-

lip, following the direction of his friend's glance.

Lord Cecil started and blushed ; for he found himself staring at Mrs. Delaney's somewhat *décolletée* figure.

CHAPTER IX.

THE AWAKING.

THERE are many guesses at the mysterious and puzzling circumstances of life which we do not reveal even to those who are most intimate with us; and it may have appeared to both Jims and his wife, without either mentioning it to the other, that this girl who had been, by a series of occurrences, thrown upon their hands, was meant to replace the daughter whom they had lost so many years before. Jims had been, like most Scotchmen, brought up to abhor the word ‘chance.’ To him and his wife a special purpose was everywhere evident in events which to other people would have appeared mere ordinary and trivial accidents. When Lilian Seaford naturally fell into the position of a daughter to them—

when they almost inadvertently began to assume towards her the character of parents—it gradually became clear to them that Providence had so ordered it. Henceforth there was something sacred and inviolable in these relations; and the old couple at Hampstead found their life grown fuller and sweeter because of this filling up of the blank in their domestic circle.

No one could help becoming fond of the girl under any circumstances: but there was much in the solitariness of her position and in the characteristics of her own nature (which were daily becoming more and more marked and beautiful), to give her a close and permanent hold upon the hearts of these two old people. And with this gaining affection there became gradually intertwined the possibilities of more tragic circumstances: for love is essentially conservative, and the more tender it waxes on the one side, the fiercer it grows on the other. Jims felt that this poor stray was now under shelter of his roof; that he had pledged himself to accord her paternal pro-

tection ; and the grim old man, brooding by his fireside over the terrible lesson of former years, would picture to himself how he would now deal with any wolf who should try to invade his small fold.

Philip was very well pleased with this paternal arrangement, except in one direction.

‘What,’ he said to himself, ‘will this girl become if she has that perverted sense of duty which her mother gave her even further cultivated by these puritans? Some day or other she will become a nun. Or she will get up the notion that she ought to murder some potentate for the good of religion. Or she will subside into a small and graceful domestic tyrant ; and make everybody uncomfortable by the production of twenty commandments instead of the original ten.’

He did not know that he himself had been the subject of much occult and conscientious reasoning on the part of the young girl.

During the piteous time after her mo-

ther's death, however, Lillian was too stunned and miserable to take much thought of her own affairs; and she spoke no more to Mrs. Lawson about her wish that Philip should not come to the house. Nor was the old Scotchwoman sorry to let that episode pass into forgetfulness; for she had but dimly comprehended the girl's meaning, and had been greatly at a loss to know how to convey the hint to Philip. Such a return for his many kindnesses would, she properly thought, have been the height of ingratitude; and so she was glad to let the matter slip by, trusting that it had been only suggested by a girlish whim.

As for him, knowing nothing of these things, he took it for granted that his interference and assistance were now needed more than ever; and his visits to Hampstead were more frequent than ever they had been. That unusually considerate lawyer, who would not charge anything for petty services, was again called into requisition, and such arrangements were made about Lillian's present position and pro-

spects as ought to have given her comfort and security. But in her desolation she cared only for the kind solace and sympathy she received from the Lawsons, and was content to let other matters shift for themselves. They noticed that her trance-like fits were somewhat more frequent now, and somewhat sadder.

By and by, as the prostration of grief wore off, and she came more into immediate contact with the people around her, Philip began to notice the peculiar manner in which the relations between himself and her had apparently become altered. This discovery only dawned upon him gradually; but it occasioned him the most powerful surprise, and was followed by other discoveries scarcely less unpleasant. In the olden days—and the few months which had elapsed since the arrival of Mrs. Seaford and her daughter seemed a strangely long period—he used to pet this child, and play with her various moods, watching her all the while, as I have said, with the interest one might feel in watching the movements of a

new piece of mechanism. All the shifting emotions that were exhibited so clearly in the large, innocent, deep-blue eyes represented to him only the workings of a beautiful mental nature, which was a constant curiosity and delight. He seemed to see a new universe, full of wonder and joy, mirrored in these eyes; and he had almost begun to believe in the existence of this fair young world that was full of honour, and honesty, and the joy of health. From Park-lane to Hampstead was for him a leap across a dozen continents—from the cold gloom and artificial manners of our northern land to some happy hemisphere, with the sunlight shining on green islands and blue seas, and the wonder of fresh and simple ways.

Now all this was changed; the old frank communion was gone from between them—nay, she actually seemed to avoid him. At first, he would scarcely believe it; then he was for speaking to her directly, and remonstrating with her; finally, with a little more caution, he resolved to ask Mrs.

Lawson in what manner he had offended Lillian. He was not without a suspicion that he wounded her extreme puritanical sensitiveness in some mysterious manner; and was afraid, in that case, he would have some trouble in securing her forgiveness.

‘Mrs. Lawson,’ said he, ‘you must find out for me why Lillian seems to get out of the way when I come up to see you, instead of being my constant companion, as she used to be. What have I done? Or do you think she so much associates me with these troubles she has passed through, that she would rather not see me?’

‘Well,’ said Mrs. Lawson hesitatingly, and with some wild woman-like grasping at this proffered excuse, ‘perhaps—perhaps—’

‘Because,’ continued Philip, in his careless way, and not noticing her hesitation, ‘if she has any painful feeling like that, you must tell me at once. My staying away from your hospitable and comfortable home *would* be rather a sacrifice, you know; but I should do that gladly if she wished.’

Here, then, was the very offer which had been desired: why did she not accept it on the spot? Mrs. Lawson had a sensitive conscience; and it suddenly struck her that, if Mr. Philip must be asked to stay away, he must not go on a false impression.

‘You see,’ he continued, in the same careless fashion, ‘your husband and I can have our talking elsewhere; or perhaps the world won’t be much worse off if we don’t have it at all. It is only of late that I have convinced myself Lilian seeks to avoid me; and I know our old confidences and amusements are quite gone. Now it is of great consequence to her that the house should be made pleasant and comfortable to her, while it is of no consequence whatever to me if I spend my evenings elsewhere. You perceive?’

‘Yes — but — Mr. Philip,’ stammered Mrs. Lawson, upon whom his thoughtfulness and kindly feeling had precisely the opposite effect of wishing that he should remain. Nevertheless, her duty towards Lilian was clear.

‘Don’t say anything about it to her,’ he observed. ‘And don’t make any remark about my not coming to see you so very often. But I shall by degrees drop off visiting you: perhaps in course of time all these old recollections will have ceased.’

‘Mr. Philip,’ said Mrs. Lawson suddenly, ‘sit down until I tell ye the whole truth about the matter. It’s better ye should ken, especially as ye’re so kind and thochtful as to care more about other folk than yoursel’. I say it’s better I should tell ye plump and plain, and then ye’ll see how ye shouldna stop comin’ by degrees, but stop atehgether.’

‘I must have committed some considerable crime,’ he said quietly, ‘to have merited this abrupt banishment. However, tell me.’

After all, the honest way was the best way. She said no more than she knew; but that again was not sufficient to compromise Lilian. She told him merely what had occurred on the evening after they had gone for their walk on Hampstead-heath, and left him to draw his own inferences.

He was very grave and thoughtful, saying nothing for several minutes.

‘I am very glad you have been so frank with me, Mrs. Lawson,’ he said at length, rising from his chair. ‘I only wish you had given me some hint before, and not subjected the poor girl to all this persecution.’

‘I thought it had a’ blawn over,’ said Mrs. Lawson, not very certain what to say, and wondering how he should take her disclosures.

He did not afford her much enlightenment. He seemed merely to have grown a trifle more reserved, and he was already dwelling carefully on the matter. Then he said,

‘I promised to stay and take tea with you, did I not? I will stay; but after this evening, I don’t think you will see me for some time, Mrs. Lawson.’

The tears started to the old Scotch-woman’s eyes. She took his hand in hers, and thanked him with greater warmth of expression than was customary with her.

At this moment there appeared at the

door of the room Lillian herself, who, apparently not knowing there was anybody within, was about to enter in search of something. The moment she perceived them, she started, glanced with a wild and frightened expression from the one to the other, as if she was divining what they had been talking about.

‘Didn’t you know I had come?’ said Philip, with marked carelessness, and taking heed not to observe the strange expression of her face.

She glanced at Mrs. Lawson, and there was more tell-tale confusion in the old Scotchwoman’s look than in the cold indifference which Philip had instantly assumed. The girl was still only partially reassured; but she came into the room and shook hands with him, and then turned to seek what she had come for. In shaking hands with her, he could not help looking for a brief second into her eyes; and there was something inexpressibly touching in the frightened, conscious, apprehensive veil that was now drawn over the frankness

and joy that had once shone there. It was still a bird-like look ; but the audacious cheerfulness and laughter of the clear blue deeps had given place to a troubled fear.

At the frugal meal which shortly followed Philip found himself seated opposite the fair young girl, who was dressed wholly in black. She was very silent and absent ; the blue eyes deepening frequently into the mystic trances which he used to observe with peculiar curiosity. She listened as though she heard nothing ; and it was only when, by accident, their eyes met that she seemed to be conscious of his presence, or rendered uncomfortable by it.

Fortunately there was no general conversation to make her reserve apparent. Jims had the talk all to himself, and was discoursing scornfully upon recondite theological subjects which had puzzled the schoolmen, but were as clear as noonday to the eye of faith. Into these regions Philip never followed him ; nor did Jims want any stimulus in the way of pretended argument or opposition. On such matters his dog-

matism would have crushed the suggestions of any disputant; and it was Jims' pleasure, on these occasions, to expound the law and the Scriptures as if he had just come down from Sinai to confront an idolatrous and backsliding generation. At such times Philip submitted meekly to be considered a typical son of Belial. Jims' fierce arguments were thundered at his head; and he never even protested against his being credited with an amount of heresy and infidelity, of bad logic and general stupidity, sufficient to have ruined a state.

'Why, sir,' Jims would say to him, 'it is reasonable to think that God would have allowed sin to come into the world, if only for the purpose of allowing us to practise the virtues of charity and forgiveness.'

'Probably so,' Philip would perhaps answer; 'but isn't it a pity so few of us take advantage of the opportunity?'

During this present discussion—or monologue, rather—Philip was unusually inattentive. In spite of himself his eyes would wander towards the girl who sat opposite

him there, with the downcast face, the timid look and absent voice. It is a dangerous thing to give a man the notion that a woman is in love with him; the confidence it inspires paves the way for catastrophes. And there is nothing more certain than this: that a young man is perpetually trying to unlock the puzzle of his future life; and that there is scarcely an unmarried woman whom he meets whom he does not regard as the possible key. It is the instinct proper to this period of existence. But whereas a man sees many women, and cannot tell how many obstacles there may lie in the way of his marrying this one or that one, the case is very different when he knows, or fancies he knows, that a particular woman loves him. Here, at least, is one solution; and straightway his imagination begins to paint pictures of the coming time; and, artist-like, he puts in this figure to see how it will look.

Jims had gone from original sin to the devil, whose reality as an actual tempter of men he was vigorously expounding. Alec

had come home from the City, and now sat on the hearth-rug, looking up with fixed wistful eyes upon his grandfather, and listening to the strange sermon that was going on. Lilian appeared to listen also; but her thoughts were far away. And farther and farther away did Philip get also; until the whole party seemed in a dream, each regarding his or her own separate world, and living apart. Attentive observers have sometimes remarked this expression on the faces of a whole congregation, and have even hinted that there is nothing more provocative of profound day-dreaming and reverie than a good drowsy sermon.

These five people now, who are apparently at Hampstead, are really very far distant from it.

Lilian is sitting on Paignton Sands, her hands folded on her knees, her eyes looking out on the blue waters of Tor Bay, where millions and millions of white stars glitter on the innumerable ripples, in constant motion under the still sky and the

warm sunlight. Over there, on the left, the wooded hills and gleaming villas of Torquay rise above the white water, with the Thatcher and Ore Stone jutting out into the bluer region beyond; away over there on the right, Berry Head runs out into the clear sea; and the hamlet of Brixham lies amid pale smoke, with the slates of its houses shining through the mist. Then far beyond, and all in front of her, the faint dark line of the horizon meeting the yellow sky, with here and there the speck of a ship that seems to hang between air and water. Beside her, the ruddy sand, the drowsy silence of the mid-day sun, and the crisp white ripples that splash on the beach below.

Philip is at a ball, and Lilian is his wife. Their names are announced; she enters on his arm; and he knows that in all the great room there is no one half so lovely as she is. She is dressed in white, and there is a white rose in her hair, and white pearls round her neck. His friends are there; she has won the hearts of all

of them; even the women have taken to petting her. As for his father— And here the lights of the ballroom grow dimmer, and the scene changes.

Mrs. Lawson is again a girl among the cattle of a small moorland farm in the south of Lanarkshire. She sees Jims as a smart young weaver coming down the road from between the fir-plantations, and he is waving his cap to her.

Alec is standing on London-bridge among the dingy idlers who lean on the parapet and look down the great gap in the City, with its steamers, barges, quays, cranes, and what not. Behind him is the roar of carriages; before him the thorough-fare which leads away out to the green islands of the Spanish Main.

By what mental process Jims' valiant encounter with the devil should have been transformed into these aerial pictures we need not stay to determine. They were abruptly scattered by Philip's rising and saying he must be off, as he had to dine with some people that evening.

‘And I am going to bid you good-bye for a little time,’ he said, with excellent indifference of tone.

‘Indeed!’ said Jims.

‘I think of going to Torquay for a month or two.’

Lilian almost started. Why Torquay? She had just been there; and it almost seemed as if he knew it.

But the reason for this sudden decision was simple enough. Among the many places he had been dreaming about, the seaside villages in the south of Devonshire were prominent; for they had many associations with the young girl who sat opposite him; and when, on the spur of the moment, he chose some watering-place as his probable destination, Torquay naturally occurred to him. Yet it seemed strange enough to her.

‘What do you mean to do there?’ inquired Jims, who was quite ignorant of any reason why Philip should wish to have this excuse for not coming to his house.

‘I shall go down with a profound de-

termination to study. I shall read for a day or two; then ask myself what is the use or value to anybody of my doing so; then I shall make a pretence of improving my health—walk, ride, and bathe every day to excess; and then I shall relapse into billiards and idleness. I know the whole programme perfectly, as there is hardly a watering-place in England I have not visited with the like results.'

'And you have nothing to do in life but that?' said Jims with a sigh.

'It is the profession I have been brought up to,' said Philip. 'However, I will not make matters worse than they are. I mean really this time to improve my political education; so that, if ever I should get a seat, I shall be able to give the history of every administration since the beginning of the century. I will study all sides of all questions; and in my first speech in Parliament I shall electrify the House as completely as did the Irish member who, the very first time he caught the Speaker's eye, spoke for ten minutes, and managed

to propose in that time triennial parliaments, subdivision of the land, the abolition of all established churches, the granting of a sum to construct docks for his native village, the abolition of the game-laws, and the repeal of the union. If they had let him go on for other ten minutes, he would have talked the Queen off her throne, and cut the throat of the aristocracy.'

'When do you leave?'

'In a day or two, probably. I will send you my address; and if anything occurs about those artisans' dwellings, you know, you can tell me.'

'Good-bye!' he said to them all; last of all to Lilian.

She held his hand just for a moment; and said, timidly looking up,

'You have been very kind to me; I must thank you, since you are going away.'

He stood on the threshold irresolute, holding her hand, and forgetting that the others were looking at him. Some wild impulses were crossing his brain—that he

would boldly give up his intention of deserting the house, declare there and then, before them all, that he would set to work to win this beautiful young creature for his wife, and so settle once for all the uncertainties that lay before him.

The opportunity passed in an instant; she withdrew her hand; and he was constrained to go. And when he went outside, he looked back at the house, and wondered whether again he should ever enter the tender and quiet sanctuary, where he had seen so much of what was beautiful and noble in life.

CHAPTER X.

PHILIP'S MONITRESS.

HE had to dine with the Kingscotes that evening, and when he reached Park-lane he found that his father and Mrs. Drem had already left. Accordingly, by the time he had dressed and driven to Sir James's house, he was apparently very late. In the same predicament, however, was a certain Lord Derrosay—an infirm old man, who tottered about on his thin frail legs, and was very deaf; and as Sir James had expectations from this little withered earl, there was no thought of serving dinner until he arrived. Philip, therefore, was just in time; and was making profuse apologies to Miss Violet when Lord Derrosay arrived.

‘ You must have been very hurried, my

dear,' remarked Mrs. Drem with her pretty meek voice.

'Hurried! Yes, hurried!' said Mr. Drem in his snappish voice; 'I daresay he was up looking after that woman at Hampstead, and nursing her baby for her!'

'You forget, sir,' replied Philip calmly, 'that Mrs. Seaford is dead.'

'Good thing too,' said the merchant.

'My dear!' remonstrated Mrs. Drem.

'Don't my-dear me,' he said testily; 'I hate your hypocrisy. You want to make people believe we're a loving couple. Very—very!' he added, with a sardonic smile.

'Well, it isn't my fault, I'm sure,' said Mrs. Drem, who was nearly crying.

Philip turned away, as was his wont, from these domestic squabbles; and found that he had to take Violet down to dinner. He found, likewise, that on her other side sat the deaf earl, who never under any provocation uttered a syllable during the serious business of dinner; so that Mr. Philip could talk to the young lady without any danger of being overheard or in-

interrupted. He began to do so in a fashion which considerably startled his partner.

‘Do you know, Violet,’ he said, ‘that my papa wishes me to marry you, and that I fancy your papa would rather like you to marry me?’

She looked up with her big dark eyes full of astonishment; and then her practical common-sense told her that it was impossible any sane man could begin a proposal at dinner.

‘Don’t look alarmed,’ said Philip; ‘I am not going to ask you to fulfil their wishes just at present.’

‘You are very kind, I am sure,’ she said; ‘I hope I shall be grateful and obedient when you do.’

‘I know you wouldn’t marry me,’ he observed.

‘Do not be too sure,’ she said; ‘I might be driven to it.’

‘I think myself you might do worse,’ he retorted, ‘and probably will. But that is not to the purpose. I am going to tell you a secret.’

‘Do,’ she said; ‘I like people to go on talking pleasant and interesting things at dinner, and not asking you to answer them.’

‘We don’t mean to marry, do we?’

‘We two together?’ she asked. He nodded. ‘Well, you may; but I don’t.’

‘Very good. Now I am going to tell you all about it, just as if you were my sister.’

‘But please don’t ask me questions. Make it a long story, and no questions.’

‘You little gourmande! Why don’t you satisfy your hunger at lunch, and make dinner, what it ought to be, the ornamental meal of the day?’

‘That is another question; and I am busy.’

‘Greedy, you mean. However, to begin with—I arrived at a resolution when I was in the hansom coming here—’

‘Was there a collision?’

‘You must not be smart, Violet; for it does not suit the smooth regularity and gracefulness of your face. Besides, what I am going to tell you is serious. When

I was in the hansom, as I said, I resolved that I would never marry Mary Thormanby.'

'O Philip!' said the young lady, laying down her fish-knife, and dropping at once her provoking air, 'I am so heartily glad of that! I am so very, very glad. And I am so pleased that you should have told me in that way—for we have always been very confidential, haven't we? But—but are you quite sure?'

There was a glimpse of humorous doubt on the smooth, round, pretty face.

'Quite,' said Philip. 'I have often thought of it; but I never resolved to do it. The fact is, you know, the prospect of having to spend one's life in the continual worry which marks every visit of mine to the house is a trifle too much. There is no frankness between us—no companionship whatever; and when an hour near her makes me as savage as a bear, don't you think the spending all one's life in that state is enough to make one pause?'

'You know,' said Miss Kingscote slowly, and with an odd expression of wisdom on

the demure face, 'it is a very dangerous thing to say anything against your friend's sweetheart ; because he is very likely, after all, to marry her ; and then he is certain to tell her—'

'And then you won't have many invitations to dinner from *that* lady. Really, Violet, your prudence is beyond praise. Who taught you all these bits of worldly wisdom ?'

'Myself,' said Violet frankly. 'I have had to look over a whole household ever since I came home from Bonn ; and papa isn't much help. However, Philip, I am very glad about this ; for although I have scarcely ever spoken to her, I have heard a good deal about her, and seen a good deal of her—and I don't like her.'

There was just a touch of unnecessary emphasis about these last words.

'Unfortunately I do,' said Philip ruefully. 'I think she is a most fascinating woman, and might be a charming companion, if she liked ; but she is no more to be depended on than a cat : you can never

calculate on her moods, and while you are stroking her, she turns and scratches you. I tell you, Violet, I have had enough of it; it is becoming a little too wearisome. If we were to marry, the house would be insufferable.'

'Pray, Philip, don't get so excited,' said Violet, who liked to have her dinner in peace. 'That is my *menu* you have twisted up.'

'It was to hide the bad French in it,' said he contemptuously. 'You, who look after the whole household, might correct the confectioner's phrases. Look at that! *Queues de bœufs en karri; croquettes de homarde.*'

'I suppose there is an *r* too many in *croquettes*,' said Violet with impudent gravity.

At this point the deaf earl lifted his head from his plate, and suddenly bethought himself that he ought to address a remark to his fair neighbour. It was about the weather; and no blazing July day could have made Violet more hot and uncomfortable than the necessity of having to

bawl out a reply to him, with the startled eyes of the whole company fixed upon her. When she returned with gratitude and joy to resume her conversation with Mr. Philip, she was a good deal more timid and a good deal less malicious.

‘But, you know, Philip,’ she said with some little hesitation, ‘one seldom gives up one’s sweetheart without having the prospect of another one—somebody to fall back upon, as it were.’

‘Is that your experience, Miss Violet?’ he asked gravely.

‘If there is anybody else,’ she hinted, playing with her knife and fork, and speaking in a hesitating way, ‘you ought to tell me the whole story.’

‘And suppose I do tell you, Miss Curiosity? Suppose I tell you of a maiden who lived in a kingdom down by the sea, and who looked at the sea so long that her eyes became of a wonderful blue; and the sun made her hair brown; and the winds dyed her cheeks with a clear rose-colour; and God gave her a perfect soul. Then she

left the sea, and the sea-sands, and the sea-winds, and she came away up to London, and lived there apparently ; but at all hours of the day her soul fled out of her, and went back to the sea. So I think it was that when the soul was out of her, you know, and she could not see very well, she met here in London a poor idle good-for-nothing, and her eyes played her a trick, and she fancied there was something fine about him, and grew to care far too much for him. And what could he do in return ?

This time her face was more than serious ; it was anxious.

‘O Philip,’ she said, ‘do you intend doing that ? for I know what you mean. The girl you told me of ; and you are not in love with her ; and you will marry her out of generosity and kindness, and the wish to make her happy. Do you really mean to do all that ?’

‘I do,’ he said calmly.

‘But you don’t know what you purpose doing,’ she said impetuously. ‘It is madness to think of it, for both your sakes.

What sort of married life are you likely to have with a woman you don't love?

'I should be content to have no other enjoyment than the pleasure I always and invariably experience whenever I am sitting in the same room with her. To look at her is a pleasure; to listen to her is a pleasure; to be near her at any time is a pleasure.'

'And you say you are not in love with her?'

'I am not. I never quarrel with her.'

'That woman has perverted all your notions,' said Violet angrily. 'She has irritated you into being so grateful for anything like the pleasure of companionship and gentle society, that you are ready to think there is nothing else wanting in married life. Some men, I know, could pass their life well enough with a woman who could be a sort of pleasant companion at meals, look after the house, and say nothing if left alone in the evenings; you never could. You would break the insipid calm of the weather with a thunder-storm.'

Whatever you do, Philip, don't marry a woman with whom you are not very deeply in love.'

So earnest was this little girl, that you would have fancied she spoke with all the authority of an experienced woman. Strangely enough, however, he paid less attention to these words now than he did long afterwards, when he recalled them with a bitter smile, and when it would have been the keenest cruelty to Violet herself to repeat them.

At present she had said all she could say on that side of the question; and now she formed her battery on another position.

'You know what your father will probably do?' she said.

'The worst he can do is to cut me off with the metaphoric shilling.'

'Is not that bad enough?'

'Yes, certainly bad enough, to one brought up as I have been; but there are worse things possible in this world, for me as for other men. I don't think I've anything heroic about me, my guide as to

conduct being chiefly my own satisfaction. But there are times when my present ignominious position begins to be unbearable; and I would gladly have something practical to work for—not because I have any grand ambition or notion of duty, but merely out of a selfish wish to feel comfortable within myself. I begin to wish that I was a stonemason, or a bricklayer, or a cab-driver, and that I could add to my dinner the enjoyment of knowing I had worked for it.'

'Is there no other sphere of exertion for one in your position?' she said, with a touch of her father's manner in her.

'You mean getting into Parliament, I suppose, and preparing additional arguments to back-up your leader, to whom your vote is of more importance than your speech. Of the two, I think I could drive a cab to more purpose.'

'Miss Seaford would not marry a cab-driver,' observed Violet promptly.

Indeed, she had an admirable faculty of cutting the legs from these tall and weak-kneed propositions.

‘You see, my dear young friend,’ continued Philip, helping her to some grapes, ‘if all this should come about as you suggest, and if my papa should be inclined to play the tragedy-father, my chances of getting into Parliament would be remarkably small. How otherwise, then, should I be able to do any grand deeds for the benefit of my fellow-men? By writing for the newspapers? Everybody fancies he can write for the newspapers, till he tries. By itinerant lecturing on the rights of man? I should insult my rustic audience in about three minutes. Whereas the life of a cabman is a jolly and healthful life—full of motion, incident, excitement, taking you into the open air during all weathers, hardening your frame, and showing you every aspect of human affairs—’

‘And touting along the gutters in Oxford-street on a wet Sunday,’ observed Violet scornfully.

‘But then you have the delight of catching a prize; for a cabman, like any other angler, fishes best after a shower.’

‘You are very well off as you are,’ said Violet. ‘My advice to you is, not to be too independent. However, I am very glad you are really going to break-off with Miss Thormanby.’

‘But you forbid my marrying Lillian Seaford.’

‘You ought not to think of it.’

‘Will *you* marry me?’

‘No.’

‘Then I am left out in the cold.’

‘Must you marry somebody?’

‘Yes.’

‘It is a pity you haven’t a grandmother—’

‘Violet, you are becoming, as Lord Cecil told you, more and more impertinent every day; whereas, with growing years, you ought to be acquiring dignity of bearing and extreme courtesy and reserve of manner. Your political notions—Heaven help your pretty small head!—demand that it should be so.’

‘Very well, Philip, I won’t do it again; for I see we are going into the drawing-

room presently. Will you come in soon? I have given up the whole of the dinner to talk over your affairs; you must give up the rest of the evening to mine.'

'Twenty evenings!' said he.

And with that she and the other ladies left the table.

When Philip went into the drawing-room, however, he found his place occupied by Lord Cecil Sidmouth.

That young gentleman had been asked to dinner; but had given a qualified acceptance on the ground that he was to take the chair at some working-men's meeting, and was uncertain when he might be free. Accordingly, although too late to dine, he had dressed and driven down to Sir James's house, taking up his position in the drawing-room until the ladies should appear. When Philip went into the room, Lord Cecil was in so amiable a mood (although he scowled fiercely all the time) that you would have fancied he had dined several times over.

He had been pretty well badgered by

diverse malcontents, however, at the meeting. It was broadly hinted that he was in collusion with the Government, and was being paid to betray the interests of the working-classes. Another gentleman would insist that Lord Sidemouth, as he called him, had foresworn his opinions in order to get into Parliament, where he would instantly veer round again; while a third challenged him to say that he believed in the books of Moses. Lord Cecil was not a brilliant young man; but he had a capital notion of being armed at all points on any subject he ventured to speak of; he was not easily perturbed; he had plenty of pluck and patience, and so he at length came off with flying colours. His various adventures he was relating with much gusto to Miss Violet, who listened with a pleasure and admiration only tempered by the thought that, alas! her companion had thrown away his gifts and graces on the wrong side.

CHAPTER XI.

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE.

MR. PHILIP did not go to Torquay. He lay awake half the night after going home from Sir James's dinner-party, and next morning he was out early, wandering alone round the deserted walks about the Serpentine and through Kensington-gardens. He had need to consider his resolves just then. He was debating the most momentous issue of his life; and he knew thoroughly and well the terrible importance of it. He had need to consider; and he walked up and down—noticing nothing in his way—with his mind contemplating the two paths which now lay before him, and wondering which he should take. There was no great hurry about the decision; but once made, he knew it was irrevocable.

The more he thought of the happy life he might spend in the society of this young girl, who had already laid at his feet the treasure of her pure and tender affection, the more beautiful and peaceful seemed the prospect. He recalled the pleasant evenings he had spent up in the Hampstead cottage—the joyous rambles they had had together—the singular halo of interest which her association with any place could throw over it. How was it that these South Devonshire villages of which she spoke, and all the wonders of the picturesque coast, seemed to him invested with a peculiar and tender romance? How came it that he had never thought of making any pilgrimage to the perhaps equally beautiful places in Ireland where Mary Thormanby had been brought up? To him Devonshire had become preëminently lovely, for her sake. When he saw in the shipping intelligence of a newspaper some mention of one of the small southern sea-ports, he regarded it with a singular interest, as if it had a message for him.

But with the cool judgment of a man who had seen much of men and circumstances, he proceeded to look at the other side of the shield. Many things combined to make it probable that, if he determined to marry Lilian Seaford, he would have to earn his own bread with his own labour. His father's irascible temper was not to be lightly provoked; and Richard Drem had not only frowned upon Philip's intimacy with Tom Seaford's widow and daughter, but had also cherished schemes about his son in another direction. The mere suggestion of this marriage would make the great merchant furious; and if Richard Drem were driven by sudden passion into quarrelling with his son, the break, he knew, would be perpetual.

Nor was it merely the giving up of certain luxuries which Philip had now to contemplate; but the separation from nine-tenths of his friends. Even if they, out of generosity, would care to keep up acquaintance with a man who had removed himself into a quite different sphere, the

calls upon his time and his own temper were pretty certain to forbid his accepting the kindness. In this way, Mr. Philip calmly pondered over the very worst that could befall him. He knew as well as any man the advantages of his position, and the various amusements and gratifications he would have to give up along with the income derived from his father. But all at once he said to himself:

‘If life is only valuable to me on account of these luxuries—if I cannot earn for myself a satisfactory way of living—I may venture to consider myself and my position a blunder and failure, and go and put a rope round my neck, like the Heir of Lynne. If things are in this rotten condition, it is better they should be tested. I will make the experiment of living my life my own way; and if the worst comes to the worst, is there not plenty of open land in the Far West where a man and his wife may manage to live?’

Instinctively, in thus contemplating the breaking down of his old surroundings, he

turned to the country in which humanity has tried its boldest experiments—in which these are still being tried, with such results as even the next century, or the next again, may not fully reap. Here, in this old land, what remained to him? Indigent gentility, which has not been trained to any of the formal professions, takes refuge, as a rule, in some endeavour to write. But in the hands of the great majority of human beings, a steel pen is but a poor and small weapon with which to meet and fight the attacks of the elements, the demands of the various appetites, and the eager competitive rapacity of one's fellows. The only alternative which naturally occurred to Philip was to exercise his skill as a whip; but the living is not a very sumptuous one which a man gains by working in partnership with a horse.

In the mean time, after plenty of deliberation, he had resolved to brave all these chances which he had calmly considered. There was no impulsive heroism, or empty braggadocio, about his intention;

but the cool purpose of a man who had sufficient reason to control his own hasty and impetuous nature. All this having been talked over with himself, he returned home, had some breakfast, then got into a cab, and drove to Hampstead.

Never before had he felt so much of what was active and resolute tingling in him as at this moment. The world lay all before him, and he had resolved to take it in his own way. The sense of insecurity which accompanies a dependent position was wholly gone from him. There now lay before him some definite object and aim, and his heart leapt up and rejoiced as he nerved himself to meet whatever might come in his way.

First of all, there was the securing of this companion whom he proposed to take with him through life. There was remarkably little of the doubtful and hesitating lover about him, as he drove up to Hampstead on this cool bright morning; there was more of the audacity of young Lochinvar, who came determined to carry off his

mistress, thinking neither of 'by your leave nor with your leave;' and Mr. Philip expected to have nothing more to do than to walk into Jims's cottage and carry off his bride.

He had not arrived at the house, however, when he caught a glimpse of Lilian walking off alone towards the Heath. He instantly dismissed the cab, passed the house without looking in, and by dint of a little smart walking speedily overtook her.

Lilian, with startled and frightened eyes, shrank back from him.

'I thought you were at Torquay,' she said.

'I intended going, for your sake; I didn't go, for my own. Won't you let me walk a little way with you? I have something to say to you.'

'I only came out for a few minutes,' she said despairingly, looking round for some means of escape; 'and I—I must go back now.'

'You must do nothing of the kind, Lilian,' he said, in the old kindly, paternal

way he was once accustomed to address her. 'How is it you have got afraid of me all at once? Don't you remember the walks we have had together—and how very good friends we were? I am going to put a stop to all this nonsense; I am going to make friends with you whether you will or no. Come along!'

Looking up into his face, there was a sort of half-wistful smile came into the blue eyes, as if she were recalling the fashion in which she used to give way to the spoiled boy. So she meekly submitted, and walked along by his side—but very slowly, as if she wished to remain at no great distance from her home.

'Now,' said he cheerfully, 'look me in the face, and say you are not going to treat me any more as if I were a complete stranger to you.'

'Very well, I will not,' she promised; but she did not look up.

'You acknowledge you have been doing so?'

'I am very sorry if you have thought

me ungrateful,' she said in a low voice ; 'for you have been very kind to me. I hope you won't think anything of it—'

'Not if you promise to be better-behaved in the future. And do you know, Lilian, why I wanted to talk to you by yourself for a few minutes? I want to persuade you to be my wife.'

'Your wife!' she said faintly and standing still, as if all the life had suddenly left her.

'Yes. I won't ask you to say anything, dear Lilian—you needn't even look up. You have only to give me your hand.'

And he held out his open palm, from which he had a moment or two before withdrawn the glove.

'I cannot, I cannot,' she said in a frightened way; and then suddenly she looked up into his face with that bird-like, quick, innocent scrutiny which seemed the almost sole weapon of defence that Nature had given this timid and beautiful creature. She seemed to read all he was thinking in that one rapid glance; and for a brief

second there appeared on her own face the expression of a great and wistful tenderness, as though she were satisfied with all she had seen in the eyes of the man whom she loved. But there was an infinite sadness in her voice as she merely repeated the words :

‘ Your wife !’

‘ Why do you speak like that ?’ said he gently, and yet with some reproach. ‘ Don’t you care for me sufficiently to think that you could be happy with me ?’

And the truth came as simply from her lips as from those of a child.

‘ I do care for you, Philip—very much ; and I should like to have been your wife. But that I shall never be.’

Her eyes, that had been wistful and thoughtful, now grew full of tears ; and she turned away, as if she would go home alone. But Mr. Philip laid hold of her, and said,

‘ I tell you, Lilian, you shall be my wife. What is to prevent our marrying ? You have told me enough to let me know

that I need fear nothing from *you* ; and if you and I make up our minds to marry, I should like to know who is to come between us ?

And he laughed with a joyous confident laugh, that sent the demons of doubt and fear, with all other gorgons and chimeras dire, howling into the bottomless pit. If a man were not brave under these circumstances — when a young and loving heart confesses its fondness for him ; when the whole of life lies before him as bright and cheerful as the young spring morning that is shining all around — when is he likely to be ?

The infection of his trust and audacity caught her for an instant, and she looked up with a glad light in her eyes ; but presently she drew back from him again, and said, with despair in her gesture and tone,

‘ No, no, no, Philip ! You must not think of it. All your people—your father—your friends—’

‘ Why, you little goose,’ said he, so glad

was he to find that her objections were merely those of detail, 'that is my business, not yours. If I enjoy your society more than theirs—if I think that the whole of them taken in a lot and sold wouldn't be worth one of your slippers—how can you alter matters?'

The frank and easy assurance of his manner staggered her for a moment; and she said, in a hesitating way,

'But, Philip, it is so unwise of you! I think you only propose it out of kindness, and that you are not thinking of yourself at all—'

'Indeed I am,' said he, in the matter-of-fact patronising tone in which he used to set her right about her French idioms; 'you don't perceive that it is out of pure abject selfishness that I mean to marry you, whether you consent or not. So that you really may give up any notion of arguing with me. It is of no use. I mean to marry you, and I will; and if you are obstinate or refractory, I will have you carried off in a carriage, your mouth bandaged,

and you shipped on board a vessel for South America, just as they used to do in stories, you know. The fact is, Lilian, you are not fit to act or think for yourself: you must leave the affair in my hands, and I will arrange it to your advantage.'

'You mean—' she said slyly.

'I mean that it is to your advantage to marry me—at least, we will assume that in the mean while; and I therefore advise you to contemplate the ordeal with a pleasant face. I should explain, too, that you have every chance of marrying a man absolutely in poverty—'

'Ah, if you were!' she said suddenly; and he saw written in her face what her woman's heart said she would be to him under these different circumstances. That little show of feeling touched him deeply; but he was afraid to speak to her yet as tenderly and seriously as he inwardly felt about it.

'Why,' said he, 'I believe you would like to see me without a farthing.'

'I would,' said she simply.

‘Then you have every chance of having your wishes gratified.’

‘And that, Philip,’ said the girl seriously, ‘is why I say again that you must not speak any more of this. It was very kind of you—it has given us both, perhaps, a little pleasure even to dream of it for a minute or two; but you must go away now, and not come up to see us any more. That will be better for you and for all of us. Why should you want me to point out that to you? why should I know it, who have not half your knowledge? Yet I do know it, Philip—I feel sure of it. If you knew how hard it is for me to speak these words, you would not ask me to say any more; and, indeed, I cannot—I cannot. Don’t make me any more miserable than I am, but say good-bye now once for all.’

The tears were running down her face. She unclasped a little locket from her neck, and gave it him. He took it, but he took her hand in his at the same time, and he said, seriously enough now,

‘ I will keep this locket, Lilian, for your sake ; but I shall not leave you, and, please God, I never will !’

With that, there suddenly appeared on the scene James Lawson, who came hurriedly up, with wonder in his face, and anger and reproach. So excited, indeed, was the old man with what he conceived to be the treachery of Philip and the deceit of Lilian, that he could scarce speak ; and there glowed in his eyes, from under the shaggy eyebrows, a fire that boded danger.

‘ I—I want some explanation o’ this,’ said he, almost gasping for breath.

‘ And you shall have it,’ said Mr. Philip with all his old audacity ; and, leading Lilian forward by the hand, ‘ Allow me to present to you Miss Lill in a new character—as my future wife.’

CHAPTER XII.

IM WUNDERSCHÖNEN MONAT MAI.

AND so these two entered hand-in-hand upon the beautiful idyllic period of early love, just as the spring was ripening into summer warmth, and there was a scent of hawthorn in the air. What a sweet and tender time it was! and the two children wandered carelessly among the flowers, and had little thought of the future. He had reasoned her, with somewhat impetuous and courageous logic, out of all her scruples, until she, too, believed that it was better for him to dare all things for her sake. Both were very happy. Life was so young and new to them now; for she had won him over to her world, that he had often seen from a distance, and admired, and hungered after. Why, he was in it now! He used to think that her eyes

looked out on a universe that was far more lovely than any he could see; and lo! it had been revealed to him also; and they two entered it, and found it very fair.

Yet, strangely enough, at this time, when they were really but as children, enjoying themselves in a world that is anew created for every human soul, and which never loses one atom of its wonder and delight, they were unconsciously showing to other people a maturity and self-reliance they had never exhibited before. There fell a certain calm and self-control over Mr. Philip's waywardness, while the more than frank fashion he had of deciding for himself and looking things in the face grew more and more marked. She, too, seemed to have been endowed with an access of keen-sighted womanly sympathy, that gradually overcame her girlish timidity, and brought her into more immediate relations with those around her. Philip had been accustomed to pet her in a grave and paternal way; now he sought to make her his most intimate friend, and to receive

from her as well as give. He accepted the decisions of her keen and scrupulous sense of right as if they were a revelation. He was not madly in love with her, as you know, when he resolved that he would secure this tender life-companion — or, at least, he fancied he was not deeply in love, judging by his bitter experiences elsewhere. Insensibly, however, her great affection and sweetness drew his heart towards her, so that he could scarce believe that this exceeding joy and good-fortune had befallen him—so that he grew more and more to seek her society and fellowship as giving a completeness to his own life, which was a new sensation to him, and as shedding around him all manner of tender and gracious influences.

You must not suppose, however, that this happy time was merely a blank monotony of contentment and peace. Far from it. After all, they were lovers; and Lilian was too much of a woman to think of throwing away her favours with a careless hand. There was nothing, indeed, tricky or thea-

trical in her manner—it would have been impossible for her to have played pert comedy-business, and to have preserved the clear shining truth that lay in the dark-blue eyes. You could not identify these calm and honest eyes with any self-conscious mimicry; and the face was far too sensitive to be able to provoke for the purpose of trying the effect of provocation. But she was at times very provoking, for all that. She would be coy and distant. When she was coaxed, she would become more obdurate than ever. Then Philip, growing peevish for mere amusement, would say vexing things to her; and finally there would be a grand rupture, and reconciliation, and she would condescend to forgive him with the sweet serenity of a young queen.

Philip rejoiced to see her in these moods. He wished she would be more wicked—not with the cynical indifference of Mary Thormanby, but with the sharp matter-of-fact pleasantry of Violet Kingcote. For what he most feared with this young girl, whose

various fancies were matter of such deep study and interest to him, was the suddenly tender attitude she would sometimes assume to him. In the middle of some scene, with both of them playing at cross-purposes for mere fun's sake, she would suddenly break down, and say,

‘O Philip, I must not vex you! I must make all the time you can spend with me now very pleasant to you, that you may afterwards look back and think kindly of me, and think I was very good to you.’

‘What do you mean?’ he asked, the first time she said something like this, when he saw her eyes grow sad and thoughtful.

‘Because I think, Philip, we shall never be married; and I wish—O, my darling!—I wish to be kind to you during the little time we are together!’

Sometimes she would burst into tears; sometimes she would only show her wretchedness in the despair of her face, and sit silent and thoughtful by herself at the window.

How to combat these gloomy forebod-

ings? It was a difficult task. Yet he strove with it successfully at times; and it was his constant care to assume with her, in talking however remotely of their future, an easy audacious courage, which was only partly feigned. Indeed, his own temperament was naturally buoyant, and there was much in his determined bearing to teach a girl hope and confidence. He was glad, too, to see her engage in these little sham quarrels; for it gave him the opportunity, in 'making up,' to be very humble and penitent. In this insidious way he tried to teach her how great a value he put upon her, and how great was the favour she bestowed on him. Joy filled his heart when he saw how this simple device succeeded—how the girl was pleased to think that she was of worth in the eyes of her lover, and that she had the power to make him grateful.

'There are some women,' he used to say to himself, 'whom you dared not tell of their good gifts, or they would become unbearable. They would take your good opin-

ion as a warranty for their expecting so much more degrading homage from you, and would air their merits as a peacock does his tail, fancying all the sparrows around are turning green with envy. But this tender creature is glad to know that you think well of her, merely because it gives her the power to make her gifts more gracious.'

It was no morbid weakness of constitution that made Lilian Seaford regard thus doubtfully the possibility of their ever being married. The sweet colour of her face, the light in her eyes, and the natural cheerfulness of spirits she showed whenever this subject was forgotten, were sufficient evidence that the lithesome young Devonshire girl had none of the sickly humours begotten of artificial life—the physical and mental products of heated rooms, late and unwholesome suppers, unnatural hours, and what not. Mr. Philip had only to wean her attention away from this one topic, and she was as bright and cheerful as a spring morning. She went about the house sing-

ing; she ran up and down the stairs like a whirlwind, occasionally producing catastrophes and alarming Mrs. Lawson; she would sometimes laugh till the tears came into her eyes over the small impudences of a tiny terrier which Philip had given her.

There was another method, too, which he discovered of breaking in upon these despondent moods—by making her, ever so slightly, jealous. A woman rarely pays a man to whom she is not married the compliment of being jealous: if she feels aggrieved or angry because of his attentions to another woman, her vanity prompts her to conceal her mortification. But in the case of this young girl there was neither mortification, nor spite, nor any other angry feeling in her heart when he spoke of Mary Thormanby; but there was an anxious trouble in her eyes, and just a touch of wounded pride and reserve in her tone. You could read the whole story so clearly in those eyes! There was no malice there, nor resentment, only the expression of a vague hurt or pain.

‘You must not make any more of these melancholy forecasts,’ he said to her one day, as they were walking along the bank of the Thames up beyond Kew-bridge.

They often ran down thither for a short forenoon ramble, the North-London line being convenient. Sometimes Jims accompanied them, and made savage attacks on the tameness of English scenery; but generally they went alone, and had long, and solitary, and happy conversations about the life-journey which they proposed to take together. In after-days, Philip dared not go near that bit of the river; but every feature of its scenery was impressed on his mind, and he could bring it all before him with scarcely any effort. And somehow it always wore the same aspect—was always seen under the same conditions of atmosphere. A somewhat cold spring day, with breezy clouds overhead, and a great glare of light coming down the steel-gray surface of the Thames; here and there the wind catching the stream, and darkening it with ripples; then the quiet towing-path, with

perhaps a solitary figure in the distance ; on either side of the river broad meadows or spacious parks round white houses that had rooks about them ; and everywhere the tall twisted elms bursting into cold green, and the cold spring flowers about the damp hedges and banks. But then, towards evening, the gray day and the windy steel-gray river would undergo a striking change ; and away out in the west there would break forth a sudden gleam of gold, with the dark lines of trees underneath growing warm and blue. No trace of the crimson glories of an autumn evening, nor yet of the frosty-red of a wintry sunset ; but only, beyond the gray, windy, English sky, the great burning of yellow light, as if it were the reflection of some golden summer shining upon another world far down in the western seas.

On this forenoon the air was unusually warm, and the early summer foliage basked in the heat. There was more sunlight, too, than in the landscape which he afterwards came to regard as typical of all these wan-

derings; and the river was blue, because of the blue overhead; while here and there a white swan floated on the still surface, under the silent glare of the sky. As they walked on—he had got her into the habit, when thus removed from the haunts of men, of taking his arm, as if she were already his small wife, depending upon him, and ready to look up at any moment for comfort, and courage, and assistance—she had been telling him that it was necessary she should go down to Devonshire for a few days, to arrange some small matters there. Jims was to accompany her.

‘Mayn’t I go, too?’ said Philip.

‘Why should you go?’ she said shyly, wishing to hear from him again the oft-repeated assurance that his greatest pleasure was only to be near her.

‘You broke off my proposed visit to Torquay, you know you did,’ said he, ‘and you owe me some reparation.’

‘I hope you did not remain in London on my account?’ she said with feigned alarm.

‘On whose account, then, was it likely I should stay?’

‘Everybody said at that time that Miss—’

But she could not even in jest pronounce the name. This thoughtless approach to it, indeed, seemed to have robbed her face of its sunlight of innocent happiness, and she became a trifle grave. Seeing which, Mr. Philip must needs ward off the enemy by returning to the subject of the Devonshire excursion.

‘You have not yet given me permission to go with you?’ he said.

‘I need not,’ she answered meekly. ‘You always take it.’

‘And why? You know you are so ungracious and unkind that, as you never give me a proper and courteous invitation, I must invite myself.’

‘No, no, Philip; not this time!’ she said hastily. ‘I do ask you, now, to come to Devonshire with us. I ask you to come, Philip—if it will please you. You must not say I was ever unkind to you—’

‘Now, now!’ he remonstrated—for he saw immediately what the sudden tenderness and anxiety of her face meant—‘we are not to have any more melancholy prophecies. I cannot allow it, Devonshire or no Devonshire. I accept your invitation; and we shall make the merriest party. I know all the neighbourhood of Tor Bay about as well as you do; and we may be able to spy out a house which might suit two young people, who are as yet uncertain where circumstances may lead them to live.’

‘And we will look at it, and think about it a little, in a kind of dream, you know?’ she said, looking up to his face with glad eyes. ‘There can be no harm in that.’

‘There can be no harm in anything done by so wise a small person as you are,’ he said lightly. ‘And when must we go?’

‘Whenever you like, Philip.’

‘Whenever *I* like? What have I to do with it? It is your project—you invite me. I expect you to entertain me all the

way, by pointing out the prettiest scenery. and by telling me all the old historical legends.'

'But it is whenever *you* like, Philip. Ah, you must not be angry with me if I tell you that I had already thought of it, and that I wished you to come, because—because I want to have this little trip made very pleasant to us all. It will be so new to us, and removed from everything that may happen afterwards. We shall always be able to look back on it as a thing quite by itself; and we shall think kindly of each other in remembering it. No; you must let me speak this time. I think you and I have only been dreaming, Philip. It was very pleasant, but sometimes a little sad; for when I look forward, Philip, I seem to see you married to some one quite different from me. And I am not angry with her; only you will tell her, when she is your wife, that I loved you very well, and that my love for you was not selfish, because I asked you to go away from me when I thought it was better for you to go.'

He was far more impressed by these brief and touching sentences of hers than he cared to show; and many and many a time he thought of them thereafter, when he was sick and sore at heart. But he wanted now to show her that her vague anticipations had no effect whatever upon him; and so he put his hand gently over her mouth, and said,

‘Do you understand what wickedness you are talking? Do you really believe that I should be doing a good thing to my own life in not marrying you? The fact is, you timid little mouse, you are afraid of my father. Why, when I look forward, as you are in the habit of doing, I see my father making a pet of you, and showing you off to all his City friends as the wonder of the world. And suppose—as you and I have already considered—that my father, with the admirable suavity of manner which is peculiar to him, should hint that I might as well earn my own living, is there any great hardship in that? Have we not youth and health on our side?

And as for courage, I have enough for both of us, surely, or I ought to have, for you have not the confidence of a full-grown robin.'

'You do not know me, then,' she said simply. 'I should have plenty of courage and patience, if the worst were actually to befall us. I should have more courage than you then, I think. But now it is only because I see more clearly than you what you ought to do.'

'You mean me, then, to go and marry Mary Thormanby. Was that the happy prospect you were constructing for me?' he asked, making a bold flank attack.

'I did not mean *her*,' said Lilian, with just a touch of asperity.

'It is not many months ago,' continued Philip, who saw how this movement of his had told, 'that I should have thanked you for even imagining that such happiness might be in store for me.'

'Perhaps you were wrong in changing your opinion,' she said with a little toss of her head.

‘Ah, who knows?’ said Philip with provoking gravity. ‘Don’t you think that men are very much the sport of circumstances in their choosing of a wife?’

‘They are the sport of their own blindness,’ said Lilian, ‘in not being able to judge of a woman’s real character.’

‘By Jove, how fond I was of that woman!’ said he, looking absently across the blue river to the green meadows beyond.

For a second or two she was silent, and too proud to speak; but at length she said in a low voice,

‘You ought not to say that to me, Philip.’

‘But why?’ he asked. ‘You keep continually advising me to go away from you; and how can I help thinking of the woman you say I ought to marry?’

‘Not her, Philip. Why, a woman like that! You could not live a day with her, Philip!’

‘You never came underneath the spell of her face, Lilian.’

‘I should see no spell in it. I could

not look with pleasure at a face that was deceiving you ; that could smile at any stranger just as it smiled to you ; that could wound you with a sweet air, and conceal its malice under a show of innocence. That sort of face may be very engaging to men ; but women see what it is, and don't like it.'

The pretty vehemence of her speech was charming.

'I wonder you can even mention her with so much tolerance,' she continued. 'If I were a man, and had been subjected to her caprices and made her sport, I should hate her. And indeed, Philip, I think that if you had loved her very much at any time you would hate her now.'

'Why, you delicious little fury, I didn't fancy you could hate anybody ! Suppose Mary Thormanby were to come before us just now, what would you do ?'

'I would tell you and her to go on walking together ; and I should walk back to the station by myself,' said Lilian proudly.

‘You would do nothing of the kind. You would go up to her, and you would say: “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself to have treated my Philip so? And aren’t you sorry you went just a little too far? And now go away, and don’t come near us two any more during your miserable life.” That’s what you would say, Lilian; and you would stand before her, brave and valiant, ready to defend me from her wrath.’

‘And what would she say to me?’ said Lilian, forgetting her jealousy in her triumph. ‘She would say: “Why, you are too contemptible a little thing to do anybody any harm; and I sha’n’t meddle with you. It wasn’t you who took him away from me, but his own bad temper.”’

‘What is that you say about my bad temper?’

‘I don’t say it, my dear,’ replied Lilian meekly; ‘she does.’

Long conversations like these were frequent during this happy time; and they generally ended in securing at least a quiet

acquiescence from Lilian. If she did not wholly give up her dim impression that she should never marry her lover, she was, at all events, reasoned into silence. This attitude left him greater opportunity for turning his attention to the more serious aspect of affairs; and the future now began to press nearly upon them. They could not long remain in this merely tentative state, satisfied to ramble about in the young summer days and enjoy themselves. Their very rambling precipitated matters; for people began to know that Mr. Philip spent all his time with a certain brown-haired young lady, who had a pretty figure and was neatly dressed. He had been met, too, when out upon those suburban excursions, by several of his acquaintances, Lord Cecil Sidmouth among others. Lord Cecil's parents had a house at Richmond; and it was no matter of surprise that he should run against Mr. Philip, when the latter was in the neighbourhood. A brief nod was the only recognition between the two friends as they passed; but a couple of

days later, when Mr. Philip was lunching at his club, Lord Cecil came and took a chair at the table.

‘My dear boy,’ says he, ‘let me congratulate you. What an uncommonly pretty little girl that is you have picked up!’

‘O, do you think so?’ says Mr. Philip, furious as a mad bear.

‘One of the handsomest women I ever saw in my life, by Jove!’ says the red-headed young gentleman, forgetting that he is President of the Analytical, and looking quite fierce in his enthusiasm. ‘Where on earth did you lay hold of her?’

Something in the expression of Mr. Philip’s face startles him.

‘What do you mean?’ says Lord Cecil, glancing through his eye-glass at the table. ‘You have broken the head off that wine-glass!’

‘Confound you!’ says Mr. Philip, with his dark face getting a trifle darker; ‘I should like to break off your head! Do you know you’re talking about the girl whom I am engaged to marry?’

‘You don’t mean to say so!’ exclaims Lord Cecil, the eye-glass dropping from his uplifted eyebrows. ‘I owe you a thousand apologies. Upon my life, I’m very sorry! How was one to know, you know?’

Indeed, the misapprehension was one which Mr. Philip was likely to encounter in many quarters. The men and women whom he was in the habit of meeting knew each other so well, that his appearance in the company of this spick-and-span new acquaintance was remarked. They knew she was not one of Mrs. Drem’s friends; they had never met her at the house. The men envied him his good fortune, and the women thought he might have exercised a little more discretion, and not gone about so openly.

You may fancy how so proud and passionate a spirit as his chafed under these scarcely-expressed innuendos. Several times he was on the point of precipitating a catastrophe, and challenging his father either to accept Lilian as his future daughter-in-law, and so bring her about the house, or

to cut the connection which bound father and son, and let the latter go his own way, and earn his own living. Yet the time was not come for this resolution ; for Mr. Philip, having acquired a good deal of prudence of late, wished to make sure of some means of independent livelihood before idly running the risk.

Meanwhile he still enjoyed the profuse means which his father had placed at his disposal ; and he employed them to surround Lilian with every little gratification and luxury she could wish. He had to exert no small ingenuity, also, in getting her to accept these things. Many a kindly little deception he practised, with the aid of Jims and his wife, in order to accomplish his wishes in this way ; and Mrs. Lawson especially took the greatest delight in devising reasons and excuses for Lilian getting this or that new article of dress, which was supposed to be bought with her own money. The girl would have started back with dismay from the notion that, besides all the various presents he forced her to ac-

cept, her lover was paying for three-fourths of everything which Mrs. Lawson bought for her ; yet such was actually the fact. Lilian's notions of the cost of feminine finery were somewhat nebulous ; and she was far from being aware how much money and how many white lies Mrs. Lawson expended, in sending her out dressed neatly in the costume which was fashionable at the time. For Mrs. Lawson, not having many opportunities herself of observing the *modes* of the season, could only say that all the articles of the girl's dress must be black, and leave the rest in the milliner's hands.

Then Mr. Philip was suddenly smitten with the idea of presenting Mrs. Lawson with a piano. The old jangling thing which Mrs. Seaford, shortly after her arrival at Hampstead, had bought for Lilian's use, was rather a painful instrument ; and the young girl used to say she wished she could practise with cotton in her ears. Philip ordered a pretty little piano from one of the best makers, and presented it to Mrs. Lawson as a useful piece of furniture. How

was she to get it into the house, if Miss Seaford's piano remained in the small parlour? It was then suggested that it would be absurd to have two pianos in the house, and that if Lilian would consent to let them get rid of hers, she might play on that which had been given to Mrs. Lawson. It was a pretty trick, and quite successful.

Is there any occupation in life to be compared to that of spending day after day in planning little surprises and kindnesses for the woman you love? Is there any happier time than that in which two young lovers, laying their foolish heads together, begin to build their nest, as it were, in anticipation, and surround themselves with small articles which may be useful or pleasant in the happy days that are coming? There is no more charming occupation, nor is there any such pleasant time,—when the touch of white finger-tips is a mystery and a delight, and the heart is full of the promise and the sweetness of the wonder-beautiful month of May.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RUPTURE.

‘I MUST go down to Thurston to-day,’ said Mrs. Drem to her husband at breakfast.

‘What do you want to do gadding about there?’ growled he from over his newspaper.

‘I must go down to look after the place and the servants,’ replied Mrs. Drem in a tone of mild remonstrance.

‘What do you pay Mrs. Roberts for, if she can’t look after the house? Well, and if you go, what then? I suppose you will be late for dinner, as usual.’

‘I wanted the brougham, my dear,’ said Mrs. Drem timidly.

‘And you want me to go in a cab, I presume?—and catch some infectious dis-

case?—and leave you a widow, with all my money? I daresay you'd like it—yes, I have no doubt you would like it. But I am not such a fool, madam.'

'I never meant anything of the kind,' said Mrs. Drem piteously.

'It is all your own fault. You *will* keep the barouche down at Thurston—you *will* go about planning visits and excursions, and never say a word about them, so that one might be prepared—and then you want my brougham to take you to the station—Victoria station, I daresay?'

'Yes,' replied Mrs. Drem, who was being prettily served-out for her well-meant renunciation and economy in refusing to have a carriage kept for her own use.

'Then if you want to go to Thurston, you may come to Mincing-lane with me, and go on to London-bridge by yourself,' remarked Mr. Drem decisively.

That was the upshot of it; and Mrs. Drem, mute and miserable, drove down to the City with her husband. He was not in an amiable mood. He had eaten too

much breakfast, and was suffering from heartburn. The dock-warehouses were stuffed with unsaleable tea; and yet he had seen in the morning-papers the announcement of the arrival of two ships laden with consignments from his China agents. Then he had a law-suit hanging over his head on account of 500 bales of cotton, which the Liverpool lawyers declared were not half the value of the samples. Altogether Mr. Drem was not in a humour to be approached lightly, and Mrs. Drem was heartily glad when she had deposited her companion in Mincing-lane, and found herself driving over London-bridge alone.

When Mr. Drem had glanced over the business-letters which his head-clerk had left open upon his desk, he whistled downstairs for his nephew. Mr. Arthur came up into the room as clean-shaven, as neat, and pale, and suave as usual; and stood, as if expecting commands.

‘Well, go on!’ said Mr. Drem; ‘why do you stand there, as if you expected to catch flies with your mouth?’

‘You mean about Mr. Philip?’ said Arthur gently. ‘I am sorry to say, sir, that I have no very good news to communicate. I am afraid your suspicions have been too correct. I doubt, indeed—’

And here Mr. Arthur hesitated.

‘You doubt, you fear, you are sorry!’ exclaimed his uncle, getting into a passion. ‘What the devil do I care whether you are sorry or not? Tell me what you know.’

‘You put me in a painful position, sir,’ pleaded Arthur. ‘I do not like to become a spy on my cousin; and yet I think a young man of his opportunities and advantages ought to be ashamed of the manner in which he is returning your kindness, sir. The fact is,’ continued Arthur hurriedly, seeing something unpleasant in Mr. Drem’s eye, ‘he goes about with her everywhere. He has been with her to Kew several times.’

‘Alone?’ inquired Mr. Drem quickly.

‘Yes; then he has given her lots of presents—a piano amongst the rest.’

‘Does she accept those presents from

him?' asked Mr. Drem, again with an eager look.

'I suppose so,' said Arthur.

'Arthur, you have done me a great service. I shall not forget it,' observed Mr. Drem, suddenly changing his manner, and repressing his satisfaction. 'I see I must have wronged my son in supposing he was so mad as to think of marrying this girl. I am sorry she should be receiving presents from him; but then young men will be young men. I am glad there is nothing more serious in it.'

'I am afraid there is,' observed Mr. Arthur calmly, hastening to rob Mr. Drem of his pleasant surmises. 'I believe the young lady has received an engaged ring from him.'

Mr. Drem was too dismayed to break out into a passion.

'Who told you that, Arthur?' said he. 'How do you know that? It must be all a mistake.'

'From what I have been able to learn from Alexander, sir, it is no mistake. I could not ask him point-blank; but I got

him to confess to many things which are very significant; and—'

'And you mean to say that my son actually intends to marry this girl—that he is going to bring this nameless baggage into my house as his wife? No, by God, he never will—he never will!'

Mr. Drem rose—as if the very thought of it would choke him—and began walking up and down the room.

'If I had another son I shouldn't care,' he said almost pathetically. 'Arthur, what can we do to prevent him? He must not marry her. I will give you a thousand pounds if you go and marry her.'

'Well, sir,' said Arthur, with a forced smile, 'I don't think it would be very easy for me to go and marry her off-hand like that. And besides, she would then come into the family all the same—'

'The family—the family?' said Richard Drem furiously. 'Who the devil are you, sir, to talk of the family? What concern have you with it? You may marry a trull or a Hottentot if you like; but as for my

son—to go and bring this nameless hussy into my house — Go downstairs, sir; if you can suggest nothing to save us from this shame and disgrace, at least you can get out of the way and hold your tongue.’

This abrupt dismissal—a somewhat cruel reward for his secret service—did not put Arthur out as it might have done. He was accustomed to his uncle’s gusty temper, and knew how to calculate the cool value of his heated words. He saw, therefore, plainly enough that never since the great merchant had accomplished the measure of his commercial fame, had he so set his heart on any one object as upon the marrying of his son into a good family; and he perceived that Richard Drem would make little scruple about what he would give in order to prevent Philip’s marrying Lilian Seaford. In his own experience Mr. Arthur had known similar cases; for there is nothing more common than this dilemma of a son wanting to marry in one direction and his father wanting him to marry in another. But the peculiarity of this present case

arose from Richard Drem's passionate nature, which would lead him to adopt any means in order to accomplish his will. Hence the possibility of a complication which might, Arthur reflected, become of special value to himself; and there was no more likely person than this watchful, calm, mild young man to take advantage of any such chance.

When he went downstairs, he gave a little start of surprise to find Mr. Philip confronting him. But Philip did not observe his cousin's confused look. He nodded, said 'Good-morning,' and passed on to Mr. Ewart.

'Mr. Ewart,' said he, 'I want you to give me a cheque for 100*l*.'

Mr. Ewart opened his eyes somewhat, and said, with an odd smile on his face,

'With pleasure, sir; but I think you have already had paid in to your account something like—'

'O yes, I know,' said Philip; 'but I must have the money. I had no idea my account was overdrawn.'

Mr. Ewart took out the cheque-book from his desk, filled in one of the green leaves, and then called Alec Lawson to take it up to Mr. Drem for his signature.

‘How is business, Mr. Ewart?’

‘Very dull indeed, sir. Cotton falling every day, and, what is quite as bad, we can find no means to prevent those rascally Chinese from damaging the shipments. They bore holes in the bales and pour water in through a metal tube; and then they cover up the hole so that you can’t see it. Consequently the cotton is slowly rotting all the voyage home.’

‘Please, Mr. Philip,’ said Alec, ‘Mr. Drem wishes to see you upstairs.’

Philip looked round, and put out his hand for the cheque.

‘Mr. Drem has it,’ said Alec; and accordingly Philip went up to his father’s room.

‘Here, Philip, here is the cheque,’ observed Mr. Drem in his mildest voice, when his son entered the room.

‘Thank you,’ said Philip, folding up the

cheque and putting it in his waistcoat-pocket.

‘There are worse things in the world than a father,’ remarked Mr. Drem humorously, but still keeping his eyes fixed on the desk before him.

‘Indeed I think so,’ said Philip, suspecting nothing, ‘especially a rich father. I hope I shall be able to be as obliging to *my* son, if I ever have one.’

‘And as lenient, Philip—as lenient,’ said his father. ‘I think I make every allowance for the calls a young man must have on his money. I wouldn’t pinch you in anything reasonable—not in anything reasonable; and on the other hand I expect you to remember that I do this. The—the—fact is, Philip, I wanted to say a word to you in confidence. We have not been to each other as a father and son should be; and perhaps you may have been led to form independent views for yourself—and to think, you know, as some young men might think, that it would be a fine thing to earn one’s own living, instead of accept-

ing it from any one. I admire the notion—I say that I admire the notion, Philip, you know—as showing independence and all that; but you may believe me when I tell you that it is not at all a pleasant thing in reality—that having to earn one's own living. I know what it is; you do not.'

'I can assure you, sir,' said Philip carelessly, 'that I have no great ambition just at present to try. When one can get a hundred pounds by driving down to Mincing-lane in a hansom—'

'And you may drive in your own carriage, if you like!' said Richard Drem eagerly. (He would not have made the same offer to his wife.) 'I am glad to hear you speak so sensibly on the subject, Philip. Your theories at the Analytical Society are all very well in their way; but they won't keep the pot boiling. Then when you go among other men, it is always more comfortable to know you have money in your pocket—'

'Yes,' said Mr. Philip absently and irrelevantly; for he was beginning to get

impatient, and was thinking of a silver collar he was about to buy for 'Pop.'

'And, you see, all my money will be yours. When I am gone, Philip, you will be a rich man—a very rich man; and you can abolish the firm, if you like, and no one need know that ever any one of the family was in commerce. You will be a gentleman, Philip, just as much as if you could say that one of William the Conqueror's soldiers was your ancestor. I think you ought to be grateful to me for giving you all this.'

Mr. Philip did not reply; he was wondering whether Lilian would prefer blue or pink along with 'Pop's' silver collar.

'I have heard, Philip,' continued Mr. Drem, diving desperately into this delicate subject, 'that you go about a great deal with this Miss Seaford'—(Mr. Philip was all attention in a moment)—'now you cannot—after all I have told you—you cannot mean to marry her!'

'I should have told you frankly long ago, sir,' said Philip respectfully, 'if you

had given me an opportunity. I do mean to marry her.'

'Philip,' said the old man with a sort of gasping at the throat, 'don't be ill-advised—don't provoke me. You have been thoughtless—you have been irritated, I don't doubt, by many things I said—but—but don't do anything rashly. You cannot really mean to marry her. Philip, if you have no regard for yourself and your position in society—won't you for once consider me? Won't you have pity on me?'

The earnestness of this appeal took him by surprise. He had never seen his father so affected.

'Won't you have pity on your father, Philip? I never asked anything from you before—I ask you now—not to marry this girl.'

'What can I do, sir?' said Philip, really touched by this pathetic demand. 'If we had been better friends—if there had been greater confidence between us—this could never have occurred. Now it is too late.'

'No, no, not too late!' said Richard

Drem eagerly. 'It is not too late if you are not married. Make her your mistress, Philip—make her your mistress; and you shall have plenty of money—'

The young man rose suddenly from the chair on which he had sat down, with his dark face become ghastly pale. All the effect which his father had produced by his passionate and humble appeal had been destroyed by this unlucky stroke; and Mr. Philip stood there, his anger and indignation shamed into silence by the very fact that it was his own father who had made the infamous proposal. When he spoke, his voice was cold, bitter, and contemptuous.

'I have to thank you, sir, for your prudence in letting others, instead of yourself, educate me. The morals they have taught me are very probably absurd and romantic; still I prefer them to yours. I confess that, until you mentioned it, that way of escape out of the difficulty never occurred to me, and yet it is quite a natural and reasonable one, I daresay. For, as the girl has neither

father nor brother, one might ruin her without danger; and besides, as she is a distant relative of yours, she owes you a certain duty—'

'What do you mean?' says Richard Drem.

'I mean,' says Mr. Philip with all the passionate and haughty blood of his mother rushing into his face—'I mean that if any other man than yourself had dared to propose what you have proposed about the woman I mean to marry, I would have felled him to the ground.'

'Don't be hasty—don't make bad worse,' says Mr. Drem, just a trifle frightened. 'You know the hold I have over you. If I have not the authority of a parent, I have at least the power to reduce your obstinacy in another way. I don't want to speak of that; I don't want to speak of it, I say; better to be quiet and reasonable in time.'

'This is beginning to be tiresome,' says Mr. Philip. 'What do these threats mean? Do they mean that, if I persist in my intention of marrying Lilian Seaford,

you wish me to leave your house, and make my way in the world by myself? Do they mean that?’

‘Well, then, they do!’ thundered out Richard Drem in a sudden access of rage, and bringing his fist down with a bang upon the desk before him.

‘Let us understand each other quite clearly,’ says Mr. Philip as calmly as before; ‘because we may not have another opportunity of explanation. I do not wish to marry this girl merely out of self-will, or to defy you. I intend to marry her, because I have never seen any woman who could approach her in all the qualities likely to make married life happy. I say that I don’t wish to marry her merely to defy you; for there is no reason in the world why you should not accept her as my wife. There is no woman who visits your house who has a more irreproachable character and disposition; there are few better educated; there is not one half so pleasant in manner. Why do you conceive this violent hatred of her? Only because you wish me

to marry into some family that is rich, well-connected, has never been tainted by association with commerce. Why should you be ashamed of commerce, or wish that I should conceal my obligations to it? I see nothing to be ashamed of in it—there is nothing; and if I were to marry an earl's daughter to-morrow, I should not desire to hide, nor should I be able to hide, the knowledge that my father was a merchant. Yet, merely to satisfy this monstrous prejudice, you are willing to sacrifice your own self-respect, my honour, and the happiness of a young girl who is one of the few blood-relations you have. If these are the notions begotten of commerce, then I despise commerce. If my share of your money is to be obtained on terms like these, I think I had better earn my own bread.'

'And, by God, you shall!' exclaimed his father, whose anger had been gradually accumulating. 'You shall find out what it is to drop your fine-gentleman airs, and consort with wretches who have not a loaf of bread for their breakfast. It is a pretty

return for my bringing you up like a gentleman, and spending a fortune on your education, and your pleasures, and your idleness, that you set up to lecture me as if you were a schoolmaster. You will see whether other people will bear with your fine manners, and your tragedy-airs, and your college-logic. Why, sir,' continued the irascible old man, his passion quite getting the better of his reason, 'go and marry your pauper, and bring up your children in a garret; and when you are starving—you and your brats together—come and beg from me, and I will not give you the bone I would throw to a dog!'

There was something terrible and repulsive in the spectacle of this old man, gloating with a demoniac triumph over his son's possible starvation. The devil that possessed him—to use the old scriptural metaphor, which has given rise to so many curious legends—seemed to be working in the muscles of his face, and gleaming in the malice of his eyes. It was not a pretty

picture for a son to look at, and accordingly Philip said quietly,

‘You will remember that this rupture was not of my making. I showed you that there was no reason why there should be any disturbance of our ordinary relations, although those were none of the pleasantest. However, after the proposal you have made to me this morning, and after the various rhetorical threats you have uttered, I have resolved to take you at your word. I once warned you that I would do so; and now it is done. There is no need why we should invite any of our neighbours to enjoy the scandal; so you may tell them, if they inquire, that I have taken chambers in Gray’s Inn, or the Temple, for the purpose of being able to devote myself entirely to study. I throw out the hint to you for your own benefit; it is a matter of profound indifference to me whether or not they know the true cause of my leaving.’

‘Go—go!’ said Richard Drem; ‘and the curse of the disobedient will follow you and fall on you!’

‘You needn’t do any more of that sort of thing,’ observed Mr. Philip haughtily. ‘If obedience to your wishes means that I am to ruin a girl whom you should have been the first to protect, perhaps Providence won’t be so very hard upon me for refusing. And let me say this to you, as I may not have a chance again : I consider our relations as father and son dissolved by mutual consent. Henceforth, if we should ever come in contact, we shall be to each other as two ordinary men are. I say this in case you might be so unwise as to try to interfere farther in this matter. As Miss Seaford, from her friendless and isolated position, requires some one to look after her interests and protect her, I have undertaken the duties of the post ; and you know enough of me, sir, to guess that I shall make it uncommonly awkward for any man who endeavours to harm her in any way.’

You would scarcely have detected any great significance in the measured and reserved tone of the young man ; and yet Richard Drem did not care to look into

his son's face just then. Mr. Philip took the cheque from his pocket, tore it in two, and flung the pieces on the desk before him. Then he turned and left the room.

Did he hear his name called as he shut the door? He might have done so; for Richard Drem, catching sight of the retreating figure of his son, was troubled by a great and sudden emotion, which produced a singular change in the expression of his face.

‘Philip!’ he said piteously. But the door was shut, and his out-stretched hand fell back again on the open desk.

CHAPTER XIV.

TOWARDS THE SEA.

MR. PHILIP went downstairs and walked up to where Mr. Ewart sat.

‘By the way,’ said he, ‘Mr. Ewart, how is Mr. Lawson pleasing you?’

All the young gentlemen in Mr. Drem’s office were called ‘Mr. ;’ so that Alec came in for his share of the honour.

‘O, very well,’ said the head-clerk cautiously. ‘In fact, I may say he is getting on very well indeed.’

‘You mean to raise his salary, don’t you?’

‘Yes; he will have 100*l.* instead of 80*l.* a year after this quarter.’

‘Then I want you to make it 120*l.*’

Mr. Ewart smiled.

‘You see, sir, we have a regular system of increase in salaries—’

‘O, yes!’ said Mr. Philip carelessly, ‘I know. But that is only for these young fellows down there, who don’t need to care what they get. It only means a little extra pocket-money for them. With Mr. Lawson the case is different.’

‘Very well, I will give him the extra twenty pounds,’ said Mr. Ewart.

‘Thank you. Good-morning.’

Nodding, as he passed, to Alec, Mr. Philip walked out of the office and into Mincing-lane. He certainly had not the air of a man who has just been deprived of a fortune, and finds himself confronted by the problem of how to get to-morrow’s dinner. He had never felt a more austere sense of satisfaction in his life; and his heart was as light as his empty pockets. Now there was something to live for—something definite to be done; and a thousand vague avenues of action suggested themselves to the busy brain of the young man as he went out into the narrow, dingy, gray thoroughfare. Mincing-lane was certainly not the most enlivening picture for a

man just turned beggar. The atmosphere of the place was thick and stifling; laden with the odours of coffee and damp cellarage; and the depressing dinginess of the gaunt buildings was in keeping with the solemn laziness of the groups of men who stood opposite the sale-rooms chatting listlessly. Here was no active, cheerful, energetic activity—like that of a ship-building yard or an engine-room—but the placid biding its time of capital. You would have fancied that these men who stood there knew that, whatever the dulness of the period, the money they had at their bankers' would pull them through; and that it was only necessary to let this secret agency go on working for them. The only brisk business going on in the Lane was that of the hawkers of small commodities—a new ring-puzzle, elastic bands, Punch-and-Judy calls, or what not; and these eager gentlemen had to move on with their wares whenever a certain police-constable came out of one of the entries. Here and there a cluster of carts and drays, with powerful horses and

burly drivers, stood by the pavement, or rattled slowly down the street; while a small genteel clerk would dart across the thoroughfare, just shaving the nose of one of the great animals with his pert hat, or an orange-woman would bargain with a meditative errand-boy about what she should give him for his luncheon-penny.

Mr. Philip's first thought had been to go straight and tell Lilian of what had occurred; but then he said to himself, 'No; she will not see it as I do. She will be in despair; she will be for throwing-up our engagement; and will accuse herself of everything that has happened. It will be time to tell her when we return from Devonshire.'

Was it superstition, or mere thoughtful kindness, which made him respect her pathetic wish that they should make this little excursion in every way beautiful and happy, so that in after-life they might look back with wistful eyes upon it? They were to leave London behind them and all its cares—they were to go down together into the

gracious land, sweet with the fulness of the young summer—and they were to enjoy without measure the happy dreams they had dared to dream. That was her thought; and there was a sad suggestion in it which formed a dark background, and perhaps made this picture shine all the more brightly. As for Philip, he did not see why their happiness together should be limited to this brief time; nor did he share in the tender and melancholy forebodings of the young girl. But all the same he resolved to comply with her wish. He would do his best to make this holiday quite happy to her, let the future have in store what it might. He determined, therefore, to say nothing to her in the mean time of this final break between his father and himself. He would not distress her with unnecessary cares. He would keep the secret himself, and let her see her native country again with glad and shining eyes.

Mincing-lane is not a long thoroughfare; but Philip had time to go over a good many possible schemes of future activity

before getting up to Fenchurch-street. Unfortunately no one of these was immediately feasible. Many of them were contingent upon other circumstances which were as yet doubtful; others were vaguely contemplated as a last resource; others again depended on the possession of leisure earned by other work. The paramount thing for him was to get some employment at once, so that his after-career, however humble, should not be hampered by debt.

There were a good many other people in London in similar circumstances on that morning; and doubtless some of them were looking vaguely forward to marriage as the first reward of their success. In such a plight, patience is the most difficult of all the virtues. To Philip, for example, there would have been something inexpressibly grateful in getting actual work to do there and then, however small the remuneration might be—in knowing that he was not wasting time. But a man cannot fight against nothing; and the most invincible courage will droop down and wither when

it finds no special obstacle to overcome. Why was it not possible for him to reënact the old legend of the rescue of Andromeda? He could see the shining maiden on the rocks—over the blue water; and he would fain have taken his sword in his teeth and swam out to her, to slit the throat of the ignoble beast that threatened her. It would have been comforting to him if poverty were some such personal monster, to be attacked in fair fight and striven with. But even the soldier of these days who charges, bayonet in hand, a battery of field-pieces, and finds himself at length confronted by an artilleryman who means to knock-out his brains, knows that, even if he slays his enemy, he will only have secured his own capacity of living. Fortune is no nearer him; that is a question of years, and the slow increase of pence. Civilisation has destroyed the chances of a moneyless man's becoming rich at a *coup*, unless he joins a band of brigands or robs a jeweller's shop, and both these pursuits are attended with risk. He must wait, and pinch, and gather

shillings together; while Andromeda upon the rock pines and tires, and even grows hungry; and then, alas! other suitors sail to her in argosies which are stuffed with pretty dresses, and fruits and spices, and bracelets for the white wonder of her arms.

Philip hailed a cab, and bade the driver drive to Park-lane. He had only been in the vehicle a couple of seconds, however, when he remembered that he had no business to waste his means in cab-fares. So he stopped the cab, and got out.

‘I shall go on a ’bus,’ he said to the cabby. ‘Here is a sixpence for you.’

The man took the sixpence, and looked at it contemptuously for a minute.

‘I’ll lend you this ’ere coin, sir,’ he said, holding it out.

‘Thank you,’ said Philip, taking the sixpence, putting it in his pocket, and quietly walking on.

The cabman followed him for a minute or two, expecting remorse to shame the gentleman into taking the cab, or giving

him a shilling. When he saw, however, that Mr. Philip paid no attention, but was apparently well pleased to have got the sixpence, he abruptly wheeled round his horse and drove off in a boiling rage.

Meanwhile Philip had again changed his intention, having looked with an uneasy qualm at the top of certain omnibuses, at the people thereon, and at the rate of speed of the vehicles. He walked all the way out to Park-lane, and was just in time to find Miss Violet Kingscote and Mrs. Drem sitting down to lunch together. Mrs. Drem, going down to Surrey, had met Miss Kingscote coming from there; and the young lady had no difficulty in persuading her friend to postpone visiting her country-house, and turn and go shopping with her—indeed, Mrs. Drem never could refuse anybody anything. And now that they had spent all the morning in making purchases—Miss Violet also having the cares of a household on her small shoulders—they were sitting down to a well-earned meal.

‘Nothing could be more fortunate,’ said Mr. Philip, scanning the luncheon-table in a business-like way.

Indeed it was not too liberally furnished; for you rarely find women very particular about a repast which is served only for themselves. Mrs. Drem, in a pretty little flurry, asked Philip to ring, that something might be got up for him; but he said :

‘It was my meeting with you two people together, I meant. I suppose you have been shopping. Very well; suppose we have a little more of it. You know the timepiece in my study—that the Countess Von Schwachenheim gave me years ago? Ladies, it is a wonderful specimen of art. The gilt cupids are worth a sovereign apiece, and the blue-and-pink china-flowers are fit for the mantelpiece of a queen. Now I want to sell it.’

‘My dear,’ said Mrs. Drem quietly, ‘you must have had luncheon before you came here.’

‘I am quite serious,’ he said. ‘I am

going off for a holiday ; and I want money.'

'MY DEAR!' exclaimed Mrs. Drem, 'this is an extraordinary subject. If you want money, you know your papa will—'

'I perceive I must tell you both frankly how the case stands. It will save time, too ; and I shall be pressed for time in making arrangements for going into Devonshire. The fact is, then, that everything has come about just as we anticipated the other evening, Violet. My father and I had a conversation this morning which was quite explicit and final. We arrived at a perfect understanding. I told him I meant to marry Miss Seaford. He said I might if I liked ; but that I should have to earn my own living. He made a few remarks about his wishing to see us all starving, that he might throw the bone we wanted to a dog ; but I daresay that was only his notion of a joke. I accepted the alternative ; and—'

'And you are going away from us ?' said Mrs. Drem with a pale face.

‘Well, yes,’ said Mr. Philip. ‘A man of my uncertain income could not afford to live in Park-lane.’

‘Do you mean that you are going to leave the house?’ said Violet, who was scarcely less dismayed.

‘Why, of course. I have to set about earning some money directly; and I cannot afford to idle about here, even were my father inclined to pay the cost of my board and lodging, which he distinctly is not. That is the short and the long of the matter; and now you will understand why I again offer to sell you the timepiece, which is my own property.’

‘Philip, you must not talk in that way!’ said his step-mother in great distress. ‘It isn’t settled. Your father cannot mean this—to part with his only son. He cannot mean it; he must have spoken in a passion; and you did wrong to accept his words literally, knowing how often he speaks in that way!’

‘After all,’ remarked Mr. Philip, ‘you must remember that I have a little to say

in this matter, and that the decision does not rest with him alone. I have no doubt it will be better in the end for me to go out into the world, find my level, and earn my own living, than to remain in a kennel all my life with a chain round my neck. My father has been reproaching me rather too frequently with the fact of my being a pauper, which may not have been altogether my fault. At all events, I am determined to have a try for myself in the general struggle of the world; and I know the prize that lies before me if I succeed. If I have too much self-confidence, it will be taken out of me; but in the mean time I have no fear. And so, with many apologies for having talked to you so much about myself, shall we drop the subject and continue the auction? As I was saying, the timepiece is a most valuable ornament for a drawing-room. It has as much gold and colour in it—'

'But, Philip, this is terrible,' said Violet with anxious eyes. 'I feared it would come; and although one cannot help sym-

pathising with you, and with the motive which has made you do this, I wish—I do wish it had not happened. Now don't you think you were too haughty with your father? Don't you think that if I were to go and speak to him more gently, he would recall what he said?'

'No,' said Philip distinctly. 'It is no light matter of a quarrel and hasty words, but a definite resolve on both sides. And I don't regret it; I am not anxious to alter matters.'

'But you ought to be, for the sake of your friends,' said Miss Violet courageously. 'I know very well what you will do, Philip. When you go out from amongst us you will be prouder than ever; and you will resent any advances your old acquaintances may make, as if these were patronage. You will isolate yourself—separate yourself from all your old friends, and make no new ones. You will withdraw from your club—'

'Certainly,' said Philip. 'A man who has no income may be a gentleman and a

member of a club; but a man who has a small income cannot be either.'

'And you will keep away from all our set; you will change your life altogether—just as much as if you had become another man.'

'And it is time I should do so, if life is to be worth having,' said Mr. Philip with an abruptness which closed the kindly protest of both the women.

Mrs. Drem sighed; perhaps thinking that the house would be none the pleasanter to her when Mr. Philip had left it. Violet was already sketching the future of her friend as a poor man, and wondering whether she would be able to give him small and secret subsidies out of her own not over-full purse. And both of them thought with a strange curiosity about the young girl who was the innocent cause of this domestic catastrophe; and wondered whether Philip would find compensation in her society for all he was throwing away.

'You know, my dear,' said Mrs. Drem, when Philip had gone upstairs to fetch the

timepiece, 'there is more in my husband's objection to the girl than the mere fact of her being poor. After all, that need not matter so much to us. But Mr. Drem has had a dislike to the family for years back—some old quarrel, probably; but I don't know. I am very sorry; I wish I could interfere.'

'And why don't you?' said Miss Violet. 'You ought to step in to prevent such a great misfortune as this would be to all of you.'

'O, my dear, I dare not!' said Mrs. Drem anxiously.

'If I were in your position I would dare anything,' said Violet, 'to secure the happiness of your two nearest relatives.'

'But you don't know them as I know them,' said Mrs. Drem in despair: 'the one ill-tempered and hasty, not to be reasoned with; the other proud and unforgiving. I am sure I hope Philip will be happy. I am sure he need never want money so long as I have any to give him.'

'But don't you see that he will refuse

to take money from you—which would be the same as taking it from his father?’ said Violet quickly. ‘And, instead of letting things drift into that state, I would leave nothing undone, if I were you, to avert such a catastrophe. It is your duty.’

‘But what can I do?’ said Mrs. Drem, upon whom the word ‘duty’ acted as a faint stimulus. ‘What can I do? Neither will listen to me. After Philip is married, I might bring the girl to see Mr. Drem suddenly; and as they say she is so pretty and engaging, you know, she might win him over.’

Mrs. Drem grasped this possibility with eagerness, because it afforded her a respite, and postponed the necessity for her interference. Violet, on the other hand, was inclined to be angry, her own generous, active, and courageous nature refusing to make allowances for this feebler spirit. The discussion, however, was brought to a close by Philip’s entrance with the timepiece, which he placed at the farther end of the table.

‘Now,’ said he, as he sat down, ‘you can admire the excellences of that work of art while you go on with your luncheon. And first, may I ask you, as this is the last time I shall have the pleasure of eating here, to get some sherry of a rather better quality? I don’t know why it is that women, when they are by themselves, always manage to light upon the worst wine in the house.’

‘What is good enough for us is good enough for you, Mr. Philip,’ said Violet.

‘But I deny that it is good enough for you, Miss Violet,’ said he, ringing the bell. ‘Indeed, I should like to know what is.’

‘That is a very pretty speech,’ she said; ‘but I am afraid you will make it the excuse for adding something to the price of the timepiece.’

You would not have thought that these three were eating their farewell feast together; and, indeed, Mrs. Drem did what she could to forget it. Mr. Philip was chiefly engaged in demonstrating his right to get a commercial value for this present; and was

inveighing against the theory that, because you have some article given you, you must preserve it sacredly, however useless, or absurd, or ugly it may be, merely because it is a gift.

‘If the Countess really meant a kindness to me,’ he said,—‘and I doubt it; for she only wanted to pay a roundabout compliment to my father—she will be glad to know that I have at last found the timepiece to be of some value. So with my horse, which poor Tommy Travers gave me a few weeks before he died. If he could rise from his grave, he would forgive me for selling Cæsar—seeing the circumstances I am in.’

However, he did not victimise either of the women. Violet offered him thirty guineas for the timepiece; but he refused the offer, and subsequently got twenty-five pounds for it from a dealer in Bond-street. Meanwhile he had to see about the packing-up of a few things which he wished to take with him to his lodgings; and so he rose from the table, begging his step-mo-

ther and her visitor to excuse him on that ground.

‘You don’t really mean to go!’ said Mrs. Drem, who had begun to fancy the whole thing was a jest or a dream.

He went, nevertheless; and soon had a few articles heaped together in his room. Then he came down-stairs again.

‘Will you tell Simpson to put these things together?’ he said to Mrs. Drem; ‘I shall send for them as soon as I have found some rooms for myself.’

‘And are you really going?’ said Mrs. Drem, beginning to cry slightly. ‘Take this with you, Philip.’

She slipped her purse into his hand. He did not know what was inside, but he returned it to her, and said with a smile,

‘When I am starving, I shall come to you for that proverbial bone. Don’t agitate yourself—there is nothing alarming or tragic in my going away. If I can get everything put in order, I shall leave London to-morrow forenoon; but it will only be for a few weeks’ pleasuring in Devonshire. I shall

see you often in London; and, if I happen to be carrying a hod, I shall forgive your not bowing to me as you drive past. There—take your purse: it is very kind of you, but I sha'n't need it.'

'And I suppose I must say good-bye, too,' said Miss Violet; 'for who knows when we shall ever see each other again?'

She looked up into his face with her pretty dark eyes as she took his hand, and said almost affectionately,

'Will you promise not to forget your old friends, Philip, whatever may happen to you? Will you promise to remember that they are still your friends, under all circumstances?'

'I promise never to have any doubts about *your* friendship, Violet,' said he.

And so he left the house. Mrs. Drem sobbed a good deal; and thought of what a pretty temper her husband would be in that afternoon when he came home.

'I should like, Mrs. Drem, to see Lord Cecil about all this affair,' said Miss Violet timidly. 'I cannot very well write to him.

Would you mind arranging so that I could see him some evening soon at your house?’

Mr. Philip went that afternoon and took a small bed-room and sitting-room in the district of Paddington—rent, twelve shillings a week. Next morning he sold both the timepiece and his horse; and got nearly a hundred pounds. With part of this sum he closed his bank-account, which had been slightly overdrawn; and then he found himself in possession of something like sixty-five pounds.

Most people have experienced, after a run of ill-luck at cards or billiards, the vulgar desire ‘to go a good one for the last,’ and crown their dissipation with a sort of climax. Something of this nature prompted Mr. Philip to devote the whole, or nearly the whole, of this money towards making the proposed Devonshire trip a pleasant one. Perhaps it was to be his last glimpse of idleness and pleasure for many a day. If so, he would make it notable—within the limits of sixty pounds.

When, having all his arrangements com-

pleted, he went up to Hampstead, and demanded when they should be ready to start, no one noticed the least difference in his manner or appearance. He was still the careless, indolent, spoiled boy, who had an easy negligence about his dress, a habit of ordering things his own way, and a matter-of-fact business-like way of looking after the comfort of every one round about him. He would have Mrs. Lawson, too, to start upon this pleasure-excursion (for which some trifling matters of business offered a convenient excuse), but she flatly refused. Her ostensible reason was that she had to look after Alec's necessities and the house; but her real reason was that she did not care to go about, in her old-fashioned dresses, with these two young people. As for Jims, it was quite another thing. Put an old man with white hair into the rustiest of black coats, give him a white shirt and a satin neck-cloth, and, if he have plenty of self-assertion in his face (and Jims wanted nothing in that way), he is as likely as not to be taken for some eccentric old nobleman

with an annual rent-roll represented by five ciphers.

It was towards evening when our three travellers drew near to the sea; and there was a warm light over the sky. The midday express had whirled them down through Bath, and Wells, and Taunton; and now they were catching glimpses of the Exe river, as it widened out into the great blue plain of Exmouth haven, with here and there the yellow sail of a smack scarcely moving across the still surface. Lilian, sitting snugly in the corner of the carriage, could not withdraw her eyes from the window. As they drew nearer the coast, she became strangely excited. The south-wind, as it came over the land, had the salt fragrance of the sea in it; and she knew that, but a little way from them, the clear green water was plashing on the beach. Then, all at once, the line brought them close to the shore; and lo! the level sunset was shining along the red coast, and on the great stretch of windy sea, and on the glowing sails of the ships. Close underneath the

waves were beating crisply and whitely on the shingle; in front of them the masses of red sandstone, steeped in shadow, ran out with fantastic arches and bold headlands into the sea; and away behind them lay the long coast-line, in the yellow mist of the sunset, so that you could see the ruddy cliffs of Devon melt into the white chalk of Dorset, and that again disappear in the haze of the eastern horizon. How strangely clear the air was! and the cold water looked so fresh and bright that it seemed to make the blood tingle in one's cheeks.

‘And there is Dawlish!’ cried Lilian, with something like a sob of delight, as she suddenly clasped her hands.

And she would have her two companions see this or that; and she would have them declare if there was anything in the world half so lovely as Devon. She laughed—she was near crying; and then she seemed to withdraw into the corner of the carriage, as she timidly glanced at two ladies who, from the other end of the carriage, were good-naturedly smiling at her excitement.

Then they got down to Torquay ; and the sunset was there, too, shining on the fair watering-place, that looked down from her rocky and wooded hills upon the smooth and spacious bay and the distant sea. Lilian was satisfied with no amount of admiration. Was not the place more lovely than anything they had dreamed about ? Was there not a look of Prague about the steep rocks of Waldon Hill, crowned with its scattered white villas that were half-hid among deep foliage ?

‘ And you must see the place in moon-light,’ she said, ‘ when the night is clear and quiet, and you can see the red glimmering of the windows up on the hills there, from among the trees.’

Here let us leave them for a little while, by the side of the sea. Another and a greater sea lay before them—the strange sea of life ; and these two young souls, looking over the far and mystical plain, stood hand-in-hand on the beach, and talked of embarking in their frail boat together.

